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T H E

Spirit and Truth of the Gospel:

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D I A L O G U E

B E T W E E N

A CATHOLIC AND A SANDEMANIAN,

K O N T H E

CHRISTIAN FAITH AND THE EXERCISE
OF BROTHERLY LOVE.

W I T H

A P R E F A C E;

C O N T A I N I N G

A brief Consideration of some Things (which has a Tendency to distress the Minds of weak Believers) maintained by a Reverend GENTLEMAN from SCOTLAND, and now Preacher at Margaret-Street, near Oxford-Market, London.

These Things have I written unto you that believe on the Name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal Life.

1 JOHN v. 13.

Now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, these three; but the greatest of these is Charity. 1 COR. xiii. 13.

Let brotherly Love continue. HEB. xiii. 1.

My little Children, Let us not love in Word, neither in Tongue, but in Deed and in Truth. 1 JOHN iii. 18.

L O N D O N,

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P R E F A C E.

T O T H E R E A D E R. •

THE following Dialogue is upon a subject of general concern, and of the most interesting nature; therefore it is humbly offered to the serious consideration of all, and, through the Divine blessing, may be of great use to promote gospel faith, and brotherly love among Christians of all denominations.

Various are the opinions which have been formed of the Christian doctrine and worship; but I verily think, that there has been a greater contrast between the tempers of professors than their sentiments in many respects, which has occasioned much wrangling and ill-nature, to the great dishonour of the Christian name, and absolutely contrary to the genius of the Gospel. But, blessed be God, we live in happier times; which must be imputed much more to his over-ruling providence than to any real change of temper amongst professors in general, which is too evident in the conduct of some, who censure and speak evil of all who differ from them, and look upon every attempt to unite the affections of Christians to each other as militating against true religion; and I will not deny, that this may be justly said of some who are not much concerned about the truth of the Gospel, and therefore put every opinion about religion upon a level; but I cannot see, that because I love a person who acknowledgeth the great truths of the Gospel, (and whose deportment is in the general conformed to it) as a truly religious man, although he differs from me in some things, that therefore I

must look upon those points held by him of the same authority with these, which, on deliberate enquiry, I have found to be truly scriptural: neither do I think that it is any breach of Christian love to converse in a candid and affectionate manner, (with a view to the glory of God) about the grounds of our difference, while we leave every man to be fully perswaded in his own mind as in the sight of God; being fully assured, that in the main truths of the Gospel we are agreed, and that our difference about some things doth not arise from opposition, but from education and different perceptions, therefore we cordially love each other as the genuine disciples of Christ; and so far as we agree, join mutually in worshipping and confiding in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, the one eternal God, *who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light*, thus endeavouring to edify one another in love. A conduct different from this is expressly forbidden by our Lord, Mark ix. 39. *Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not, for there is no man can do a miracle in my name that can lightly speak evil of me;* so it may be truly said, that no man can place entire confidence in Christ for eternal salvation, and lightly disobey him; and all such as love the Lord Jesus Christ ought to be highly regarded by us, though in some things we may differ. For supposing I may have attained to a more full knowledge of the Scripture than another, yet if I have not the spirit and temper of the Gospel, I am more materially deficient than he who is really a partaker of that spirit, though dark in some points contained in the word of God; and as love is the distinguishing mark of a Christian, therefore we ought to cherish it in ourselves, and promote it in others, according to the will of Christ, who saith, *A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another.* Love is that which he himself hath exercised in a most marvellous manner, and in the highest degree, even to us who are hell-deserving sinners, which cannot but recommend it to all who profess faith in him; and the more fully

fully we are enabled to see the incomparable beauty of the Lord, and are perswaded of his special love to us, the more shall our hearts be attracted and assimilated to him, and to all who are formed into his image; but, although I heartily and earnestly wish, that all the dear children of God were fully persuaded of their particular interest in Christ, yet I am far from agreeing with the Reverend Mr. Barclay, who maintains, that full assurance of special interest in Christ is essential to faith, so that none are believers, nor the children of God, who are not thus persuaded. This, his assertion, has not only a tendency to distress the minds of those whom God would have comforted, but it is also contrary to his holy word, which I shall endeavour in a few instances to shew; and allow me humbly to observe, that this Gentleman preaches of faith as if all other ministers denied it; whereas many do declare, in a more scriptural way, that that faith which is of the operation of God is accompanied with sweet consolations to the soul, and good hope (through grace) of eternal life, in and by Jesus Christ our Lord, which is received directly by faith without works. But they differ much from him in warning professors in general against resting in an empty and fruitless faith, seriously declaring, that however full and strong their assurance of faith may be, yet if it is not productive of good works, it is not the faith of God's elect, and they have the conduct of Christ and the Apostles to countenance them.

Matth. vii. 21. Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in Heaven.

Their calling him Lord, implies that they had faith; their repeating it, says that it was an appropriating faith and glorying in him; but their not doing the will of God, proved that their faith was not from a divine principle wrought in the soul, nor having a real union to Christ, therefore it profiteth nothing unto salvation. Again, St. Paul saith, 1 Cor. xiii. 2. *Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains,*

tains, and have not charity, I am nothing ; so that a man may have the faith of working miracles, and not have that faith that worketh by love ; and yet such persons are generally very confident of their interest in Christ ; whereas those who are the subjects of real grace, and of that faith which purifieth their hearts unto the unfeigned love of Christ and all men, especially those who are of the household of faith ; they, I say, who have least reason to fear concerning their interest in Christ, are often attacked with doubts about the reality of it ; for Satan, their great adversary, will not (if he can) suffer them long to enjoy the exercise and comfort of that faith, which is to them the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, their victory over the world, and that whereby they resist the Devil, as also the shield by which they quench his fury darts ; and we may with great propriety assert, that, that faith which was never violently assaulted by Satan, is not of God, for all that is of the grace of the Holy Ghost is strongly opposed by him, who goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, 1 Pet. v. 8. and he even presumed to tempt our blessed Lord himself, Matth. iv. 3. *When the tempter came unto him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.* Did he thus throw his fiery darts at the green tree, and will he not do it to the dry ? Did he tempt the only begotten of the Father in this as well as in other things, and will he let those who are only the adopted sons and daughters of God, will he, I say, let them go free ? Surely, no : he desires to sift them all as wheat, and unweariedly endeavours to take from them this piece of their heavenly armour ; which may be compared to Moses's hand, when it was lifted up, Israel prevailed ; but when it was down, Amalek prevailed ; even so when this divine faith of assurance in Christ, as the Lord our righteousness, strength, and salvation : I say when this faith is in lively actings on Christ as aforesaid, under the power of the Holy Ghost, then the Christian

tian becomes a conqueror over Satan, and all his connections only in and through Christ, who hath loved him, and therefore Satan endeavours to make them question this their interest, well knowing that if this is weakened, so will all the other parts of the Christian armour be; and this his temptation has sometimes power over them; 1st, From the sense they have of the greatness of their iniquities and hell-deservedness. Psal. li. 4. 2dly, By the sight they have of the sink of sin which is in their hearts, therefore they are easily brought to think that there is nothing of Christ in them, because of so much corruption and unbelief. Prov. xxx. 2, 3. 3dly, By the Lord's sometimes withdrawing the sweet manifestations of his love, either for sin done, or for the prevention of it. Psal. xxx. 7. *Thou hidest thy face, and I was troubled.* Lastly, The temptation is strengthened by some awful Providence which they are under, as Asaph in the 73d Psalm, Heman in the 88th Psalm, Job, and many others recorded in Scripture. But possibly Mr. Barclay may with some others say, that as Christ is spoken of in his state of humiliation by the Prophets and in the Psalms, therefore all these parts which express distress or dejection of mind, are only to be applied to Christ, and not to his people; for it is he that repented for us, that was tempted for us; and the stony heart is taken away from us in him, and when he was born, we were born in him, and all that is said of a work of grace in the hearts of his people, and the fruits of it in their lives, &c. is all to be applied to Christ, no alteration being (as they say) in his people, but is all in him. It is, indeed, assuredly believed by all who are taught of God, that his eternal Son did actually assume human nature into a personal union with himself, and in his human nature was tempted, dejected, was deserted for a while of God and of man, obeyed the precept, and bore the penalty of the law, suffered both in body and in soul, in life and death, in the most painful and ignominious manner; and all this he did in the

law room of his people, for he was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him; but doth this exempt them totally from all afflictions, temptation, mourning, and death? No, surely: we see that they are subject to all afflictions, both in body and mind, even as Christ was; their sufferings are in no degree, or in no sense meritorious. This was only peculiar to Christ's doing and dying; neither doth his people suffer in any respect like unto him, either in regard to the degree or cause of his sufferings; all his were the fruit of a broken covenant, and the penalty and curse of the law. Gal. iii. 13. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us;* so that in this there is an essential and material difference between the sufferings of Christ and the sufferings of his people; all their afflictions come in the way of mercy, accompanied with new covenant blessings, and the end of them all is, not meritoriously nor efficiently, but instrumentally to take away sin. Isai. xxvii. 9. They are so far from being freed from a likeness to Christ in heart and life, that they are absolutely appointed to it: *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.* Rom. viii. 29. And this conformity does consist in a likeness to him in temptations, sufferings, holiness in heart and life, death, resurrection and eternal glory; the purpose of God is not that Christ only should be all this for them, but that they also should in all this be conformed to him in their measure. Is Christ holy, so shall they be holy, *being after God created in righteousness and true holiness,* Ephes. iv. 24. Is Christ pure, meek, humble, &c. so are they called to be, and so shall they be, Matth. v. 5, 8. Matth. xi. 29. Did Christ abound in good works, so shall they, for they are God's workmanship *created in Christ Jesus unto good works.* Eph. ii. 10. Was Christ hated and persecuted by the world, so shall they be, John xv. 18. Did Christ while in our world weep and mourn, so shall they under the influence

fluence of the spirit of grace. *They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for him, &c.* Zech. xii. 10. And thus I might shew, that in every thing there is a near resemblance betwixt Christ and his people, both as the result of his eternal purpose, and the effect of his divine grace in the hearts of his chosen, in their vital union and growing up into him; and this union might be illustrated by many natural things; let one instance suffice, viz. the vine: the fulness of life and juice is in the root; yet if the same juice and life is not diffused to the branches, they will be fruitless, die, and wither; so if Christ doth not communicate of his life and fulness to us, we have absolutely no communion with him. In a word, though what is said in the Scriptures, concerning distress and dejection of mind, was eminently experienced by, and fulfilled in, our Lord Jesus Christ, yet it was also experienced personally by the Saints whom we read of in the Scriptures; many were filled with great fears through various temptations, and as it was then, so it is now; for though the Lord hath said concerning the enemy, hitherto shalt thou come, and no further; and he will not suffer his people to be tempted above what he enables them to bear, but will make a way for their escape; and Christ hath prayed that their faith fail not, therefore it shall never finally be vanquished; nevertheless, Satan is sometimes suffered to make their hearts to faint, and their hands to hang down, till the Lord is graciously pleased to come, both in an immediate way to their hearts, with divine support, and instrumentally, by raising up against the enemy his faithful ministers in all ages; who, like Aaron and Hur, hath laboured hard to bear up the Lord's people's hand of faith; not encouraging their doubts, but endeavouring to expel them, by setting before them the fulness, freeness, efficacy, and perpetuity of rich sovereign grace; which reigns through Christ Jesus unto eternal life, and is unto all, and upon all them that believe. And in this they act agreeably to their divine

instructions from their heavenly master, who hath said to all his ministers, *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warefare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins*, Isai. xl. 1. The persons here spoken of are the real people of God, and the subjects of his grace, and supposed to be in distres, with doubts and fears, respecting the remission of their sins ; therefore the prophet, and all the ministers of Christ, are warranted, yea, even commanded to set before his people, and, in a ministerial way, to apply to them in a special manner, all the benefits flowing from the everlasting love of God, and the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ. He has commanded his ministers to preach the gospel to every creature ; and sinners in general are called to repent, and believe the gospel ; but the comfort and privileges of it are only to be applied in the aforesaid way, by ministers to those who are brought under the power of it, by seeing the absolute necessity of an interest in Christ, while, at the same time, they are filled with doubts and fears ; and therefore, the ministers of the gospel are commanded again and again *to strengthen the weak hands, to confirm the feeble knees, and to say to them who are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not : behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense ; he will come and save you*, Isai. xxxv. 4. And as the Lord hath thus enjoined his ministers, so his own conduct is agreeable thereunto : he first woundeth, and then healeth ; he killeth, and he maketh alive ; he first convinceth of sin, and then of righteousness. I will not say how long or how short a time the Lord may suffer his people to lye in their wounds, as it were, before they are healed ; it is sometimes instantaneous, by the application of the blood of Christ to the wounded conscience, as seems to have been the case of Lydia, and many others recorded in the New Testament, Acts xvi. 14. whereas we see it otherwise with the

the jailor mentioned in the same chapter, and especially in regard to the conversion of Saul, chap. ix. and so we find the Lord's people at times, even after their acknowledging the Lord for their God, brought into fears and doubts, not from any absolute reason for it, but from the aforesaid cause, and the weakness or littleness of their faith; which, I suppose, will be admitted of, being expressly declared in the Scriptures; for our Lord says, O ye of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt. We see the person our Lord spoke to was a believer, though weak in faith; which is a full proof that real believers are subject to doubts, yet our Lord does not consign them over to hell, because they doubt, but he graciously removes their doubts, both ministerially and efficiently; and in proof of this, I might cite a great part of the word of the Lord. Hear him thus speaking the following comfortable words to the distressed and doubting Zion: Isai. xlix. 14. *But Zion, saith the Lord, hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me: here is a double doobt; first of his affection, and secondly of his memory; but, O what a gracious answer, fully adequate, to remove the doubts of his people. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may, yet will not I forget thee, saith the Lord. Behold, I have engraven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me.* And as the words of the Lord, so the grand and eternally memorable work of mercy, which, I think, seems to be pointed at in the forementioned verse, under the phrase, *the palms of my hands*, is, I say, represented as having a particular respect to doubting souls, who are often attacked with great fears about their eternal concerns, Heb. ii. 14, 15. *Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself took part of the same; that through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the Devil; and deliver them, who, through fear of death, were all their life-time subject to bondage.* If it should be quer-

ried who they are that are spoken of, it is manifest by the first clause, that they are the children of God, both by electing love and regenerating grace; for the life here spoken of is not simply their temporal life, for in their natural state, they are as uncerned and free of doubts about spiritual things as others. While the strong man armed keepeth the house, the goods are in peace; therefore we are to understand, that spiritual life which they are made partakers of, by virtue of their vital union with Christ, from that period they are less or more subject to fears, not simply of the death of the body, but of eternal death, as the desert of their sins. Psal. xxxix. 13. Thus have I touched upon some instances amongst many, whereby it is abundantly evident, that the Lord doth both speak to, and send his ministers to comfort and encourage his people, (who are prone to despondency and full of fears) by setting before them, and by his spirit applying to their hearts, the rich promises of his everlasting love and boundless grace, revealed in the Scriptures of truth, and which reigns through Jesus Christ unto eternal life. But the forementioned Gentleman declares, that those who doubt of their interest in Christ are not the children of God. This is, indeed, offending the generation of God's people, and saddening the hearts of those whom the Lord would have made glad; for although they are weak, yet they are his children; so the Lord speaks concerning Ephraim. Jer. xxxi. 20. *Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child?* It implies the affirmative, that he indeed was all this unto the Lord; and though all such as Ephraim were have much fears and doubts, yet they are partakers of real grace, and possessed of true faith, being fully persuaded of the reality and dignity of Christ's person and character in every respect according to the Scripture, and verily believe the fulness and efficacy of his grace, and the perfection of his righteousness, to the justification of all those who are cloathed therewith, and vitally united to him;

him; but their fears and doubts proceed from a temptation, to think that they are not of the happy number, while they are earnestly breathing after both an interest in him and conformity to him; which are all evident effects of that grace which is of the operation of God, and accompanies salvation; and although doubts and fears are both distressing to the soul and dishonouring to God, as it is a degree of distrust of his love and faithfulness, yet, as they are through divine grace brought to mourn over the iniquity of their ways, and the degeneracy, corruption, and unbelief of their hearts, the Lord will not deal with them as if they were the children of the Devil; for though he be *the high and lofty one that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy*, he saith, *I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.* Isai. lvii. 15. verse 18. *I have seen his ways, and will beal him; I will lead him also, and restore comforts to him and to his mourners.* But Mr. Barclay would exclude from every degree of hope every doubting soul, and all who condole with them; which is diametrically opposed to the text, and far from the conduct of our blessed Redeemer, *who will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax;* his errand into the world was *to bind up the broken hearted, to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness,* Isai. lxi. 3. And as all this, and much more to the same purpose, is contained in the testimony of God, how can he pretend to believe it, when he is so opposed to it; for if the Lord does himself speak, and send his ministers to comfort his people under disconsolate apprehensions concerning their eternal state, then it follows, that the people of God are sometimes in doubts and fears, and to deny this is to discredit the testimony of God in this point.

The above Gentleman tells us, that unbelief is
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the sin against the Holy Ghost. It is, indeed, true, that every degree of sin is against the one eternal God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and that unbelief, in the grossest sense of the word, is an ingredient in that sin which is said to be against the Holy Ghost; but I humbly think, that it fully appears from Matth. xii. 31, 32. and its connection with the preceding verses, that the sin against the Holy Ghost is the imputing all the wonderful and gracious effects done in proof of, and in conjunction with, the doctrines of Christ, and wrought by the power of the Holy Ghost, both externally and internally in the hearts of his people; it is, I say, ascribing all this to the agency of the Devil, from a malicious heart and wicked design, even against the conviction of their own minds. John ix. 41.—Heb. x. 29. This is a sin of the most complicated nature, and not what may be called simple unbelief, even when taken in the highest sense of the word; for though there are some who have much fears and doubts, yet they are partakers of real grace, and possessed of the essence of Gospel faith; which lies not simply in believing our own interest in Christ, but in believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and receiving him as our Prophet, Priest, and King, confiding in him alone for eternal life. They who thus believe, from a divine influence on their hearts, so that they turn to God from the love and practice of sin, and also from all confidence in their own righteousness, seeking justification and acceptance with God, through the alone doing and dying of our Lord Jesus Christ. This, I say, is true faith; and even admitting that there is a degree of unbelief in their doubting, yet they are not to be denominated unbelievers, as those who absolutely discredit the truth of Christianity; and even this, some of the real children of God have been tempted at times to question, yea, and almost ready to give it up, as David, Psal. cxvi. 11. *I said in my haste, all men (that is, the Prophets as well as others) are liars.* But though it was real unbelief, yet it was not

not the sin against the Holy Ghost, as they were recovered from this and all sin through rich and sovereign grace ; but those who commit this sin shall never be saved. It is not as he glosses it ; viz. If any man speak against the Holy Ghost, if he repents not of it, it shall never be forgiven him ; but this is absolutely foreign to the text, read it. *Whoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him* (but not without repentance and faith in his blood). But whoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world nor in the world to come, because God in his holy Sovereignty has denied to all such the grace of repentance.

He observes, that by this world (in the text) is meant the Jewish state, and by the world to come, the Christian state ; to prove which, he quotes Heb. i. 2. *By whom also he made the worlds.*—The worlds in this verse are all things that he upholds by the word of his power, verse 3. This is declared by the Apostle as an undeniable proof of Christ's Godhead ; for he it is who made and upholds all worlds, both visible and invisible. This is the plain and genuine sense of the text ; therefore his gloss is a perverting of it, and weakening the arguments for the Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and strengthening the hands of the Arians, who labour hard to evade the force of this and every other text of the same scope ; for the worlds which Christ made, mentioned in the text, he yet upholdeth by the word of his power ; but the Jewish world, as he calls it, was, in fact, dissolved before the Epistle to the Hebrews was wrote ; therefore it could not be intended in the worlds, or all things which our Lord then did, and yet doth uphold. Neither will his meaning stand on Matth. xiii. 32. for the Christian world, as he terms it, did commence at the incarnation and ministry of Christ. As when the Sun appears, the night is past, and the day is begun ; just so when Christ, the glorious Sun of righteousness, aroale, the night, or Jewish world, began

began to vanish away ; therefore the world to come in the text, cannot mean the Christian world, because it was actually come ; so that by this world in the text is meant, this present state of existence, and by the world to come, the future state to which we are all hastening. This is the true, and, I believe, the universally received sense of the words ; and to deny it is in effect to deny a future state ; for the instruction given us in this text is, first, that we are all immortal creatures, and shall exist in a world to come ; secondly, that whosoever shall sin as aforesaid against the Holy Ghost, shall not be forgiven, neither in this world nor that which is to come ; every other sin that we approve of, indulge, and live and die in, shall not be pardoned in the world to come any more than this. For where the tree falleth, there shall it be ; but every other sin that through grace is repented of, shall, for Christ's sake, be forgiven in this life ; and though many of God's chosen and called people may and have left this world under a cloud, without any clear evidence of their sins being forgiven, yet in the world to come, and in the day of judgment, it will be made manifest, that they were vitally united to Christ, and sanctified by the faith that is in him, and their iniquities forgiven them before they left this present state or world ; this is agreeable to what our Lord saith, John vi. 39. *This is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.* This cannot simply respect the raising up of the body, (for there shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust) but a raising up their character as related to, and interested in, Christ, being the purchase of his blood, and the subjects of his grace ; which was greatly obscured, and in some respects unknown, while they were in this world, though it really existed before they were taken out of the world ; but at that day it shall be brought to full light, and they openly acknowledged, in the sight of angels and men, to be the children of God, and

and as such introduced to the kingdom prepared for them of their Father, to be inconceivably blessed in the enjoyment of the triune God, for ever and ever. But as for those who are left to commit the sin against the Holy Ghost, as they were not the subjects of renewing grace, consequently their sins were not pardoned in this life, and there shall be so far from any appearance of it in the world to come, that their condemnation shall be solemnly declared, (together with all who die in a Christless state) with a Depart from me ye cursed, &c. for God hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth, hath, in his sovereign pleasure, put an eternal negative upon this particular sin; so that there is no hope for them, neither in this life, nor that which is to come; and this recorded as a warning and caution to all men, how we think, speak, and act, of and towards the things of the Spirit of God, as recorded in the holy Scriptures, and experienced by his people, and also to awaken in us earnest breathings, that the Lord, the Spirit, would graciously deign to deliver us from this and all other sins, and bring us to a vital union with Christ, that we may in this life receive the remission of our sins, and in the world to come life everlasting.

Mr. Barclay says, that those who doubt or fear concerning their interest in Christ, cannot, nor ought not to pray; we may observe, that although they sometimes are enabled to rejoice in the promise, as their charter for eternal life in Christ Jesus, yet because they have not always the comforts of them, they therefore fear least they have no interest in him. In this they may be said to act as irrationally as one who has got a good right to an estate, but because he has it not now, and fears least he should never come to the enjoyment of it, therefore makes little or no accounts of his rights and title to it; and it often happens, that those who have an undoubted right to a temporal estate never come to the possession of it; but it shall not be thus with the Christian;

for he is intitled to an inheritance, that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven, and is kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ; therefore they should not throw aside their written rights and titles, viz. The promises of a faithful covenant keeping God ; but should carry them to the higher court, even the Throne of Grace, and there plead them in assurance of success, through our great high priest and righteous advocate, Jesus Christ. It is through the neglect of this, that the minds of weak believers are greatly distressed and discouraged in the duty of prayer. Indeed, the Christian at his best estate knows not how to pray as he ought ; but this is our comfort, that the spirit helpeth our infirmities, and many of those who are doubting souls are sometimes earnest praying souls, being partakers of the Spirit of Grace and supplication, and enabled to look on him whom they have pierced, and mourn, panting for nothing so much as being washed in his blood, formed into his image, and brought into near and sweet communion with him. Zech. xii. 10. Song i. 7.

As to his saying they ought not to pray, this is evidently opposed to the testimony of God ; for we find that the Apostle enjoined even Simon Magus, though in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity, to pray that the thoughts of his heart might be forgiven him, Acts viii. 23. And the Lord says to those that are in distress, (yea, and soul trouble as well as others is intended) *Call upon me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me,* Psal. l. 15. And, O how does the soul glory in and glorify God, when pardoning mercy is manifested to the heart ? But again, concerning the great promises of the new covenant, which are all, yea and amen, in Christ Jesus, the Lord says, *for all these things I will yet be for this enquired of, by the House of Israel to do it for them,* that is, to take away the stony heart and give them a heart of flesh, to put his Spirit within them, to sprinkle them with clean water, and cleanse them from all their sins, &c. Ezek. xxxvi. 37.

And

And so far are those who are in spiritual dejection of mind from being forbid to pray, that they in particular are called upon and encouraged to it. Song ii. 14. *O, my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs, let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.* O what grace is here in every word, and all spoken to a dejected soul, and such as are ashamed to appear before Christ, and is expressive of the delight Christ takes in their persons, and in their speaking of and praying to him. From this and much more that might be said, it is evident that his asserting, that such ought not to pray, is contrary both to the Spirit and Word of God.

There are many other things which this Gentleman advances, both in his preaching and writing, of which I heartily pray that he may be brought to see his error, as well as the things I just touched upon, and that because of their great tendency to distress the minds of the dear children of God; who are often, through various temptations, made to doubt of their interest in Christ, which he calls the sin against the Holy Ghost, and some of their poor hearts are at times ready to think so; but, I humbly think, that what I have said sufficiently proves, that unbelief itself, much less their doubtings; is not the forementioned sin; neither can they, being the subjects of grace, commit that sin; and, although doubting of their interest, is no argument against their being the subjects of saving faith, nevertheless, such doubtings are far from being a part, or any honour to the Christian character; it is, indeed, a coming greatly short of the Christian's privilege, which is no less than full assurance of their special interest in the everlasting love of God, and eternal redemption through Jesus Christ; of which God hath been graciously pleased to give the strongest ground to his people to be thus assured. Heb. vi. 17, 18. And even the want of this greatly unfits the Christian for the cheerful discharge of religious and civil duties. For

the Christian faith may be compared to the chief spring of a machine, if that be defective, all the other parts are disabled ; even so if faith is stripped of all personal assurance of interest in Christ, it is then enervated, and none of the graces, which the believer is enriched with, can act vigorously, for want of that Gospel faith, which, in the hand of God, has an immediate influence on Godly fear, love, patience, hope, &c. And this hope is not simply a fervent wish for some future good, but it is a lively expectation of grace here, and glory hereafter ; the certainty and foretaste of which is now received by an appropriating faith in the promise of Jehovah, revealed in the Gospel, (and when it is wrought) in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, it excites our souls to aspire heavenwards, and kindles in our breasts fervent love to God for what he is in his glorious self, which is only seen by his marvellous works, and his rich and undeserved grace to us. This faith animates us in the chearful practice of every thing that tends to the glory of God, and serves to promote the present and future happiness of all who love our Lord Jesus Christ, of what name or party soever. This precious faith is much the subject of the following Dialogue ; and as our Lord Jesus Christ is both the author and finisher of it, we have need, with the Apostles, earnestly to pray, Lord increase our faith, Luke xvii. 5. It is he only that can do it, and we have a good ground of hope that he will do it, for he gives grace and more grace ; therefore may we constantly and fervently implore, that he would graciously accompany the following, and every other means of edification, with his divine blessing, that we may be strong in faith, abound in love, and in all the fruits of righteousness, which are to the praise of his eternal grace ; to whom, with the Father and Holy Ghost, the one eternal God, and, I trust, our God, be ascribed all glory, now and for evermore. Amen.

T H E

Spirit and Truth of the Gospel:

OR, A

D I A L O G U E

B E T W E E N

A CATHOLIC AND A SANDEMANIAN,

O N

SAVING FAITH AND THE EXERCISE OF CHRISTIAN LOVE.

C. I AM very glad brother to see you; I hope that you are in all respects well, and I wish that your happiness may continually increase; for although we differ in judgment touching some things, yet I hope not in affection, for I can truly say brotherly love continues on my side.

S. I thank you, Sir, for your respectful and kind wishes for my present and future welfare, which you have so warmly expressed, and you may depend upon a reciprocal return of the like, as my near and good neighbour. But, as touching brotherly love, by which I suppose you mean that which subsists among the followers of Christ. If so, I must tell you that this I cannot exercise towards you, unless I had good reason to believe you a Christian, by following the Lamb wheresoever he goeth.

C. You have rightly judged of what I intended by brotherly love, even that divine principle which exists in the hearts of all those that are born of God, whereby they are taught to love one another; neither can this love be in full exercise, but to such as appear to be the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus; and

and indeed there is nothing in me, or done by me, that I can found my hopes of salvation simply upon ; yet blessed be God, for Jesus Christ, *who has compassion on the ignorant, and those that are out of the way,* and through his righteousness, worthless me trusts to be saved, even as you ; but, I hope that you do not view all that differ from you in the same light ; if so, the number of Christians in your account are very few, and their rise of a very late date, your separation from others not being yet fifty years.

S. It is a Scripture injunction, that we should *not follow a multitude to do evil*, and it is said, *narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.* St. Paul says, that *all they of Asia hath forsaken me* ; and as the apostacy from the Christian faith was very early, and very universal, so that the number of those that believe are very few ; yet, blessed be God, there are some who make the word of God the standard of their faith and practice ; and as to all other societies, who are in contrast to the Scriptures, we cannot look on them as the churches of the living God. As to the supposed novelty of our principles, this is grounded on your ignorance of them ; they, indeed, are not to be found in your anti-christian standards of religion, but they are fully contained in the writings of the Apostles and Prophets ; while you and others speak not according to this word, it is evident there is no truth in you, therefore we cannot view you nor love you as the disciples of Christ.

C. There is indeed, brother, very few who care to enter into the purity and spirit of Christianity ; and it is manifest, that those who can, indulge themselves in singing of prophane songs, attending play-houses, and places of carnal diversions ; these, I say, can hardly be numbered amongst those that walk in the narrow path that leadeth into life ; but this I mention more in a way of lamentation than accusation ; neither do I directly intend to question the divinity of your principles ; for, whatever you, brother,

ther, may think of me, I verily believe, that you hold nothing in religion but what you think is contained in the word of God ; and if the points held by several churches were compared with yours, I really believe that they would exactly harmonize ; or, if there should be some things that we cannot believe, which, nevertheless, you assert to be scriptural, is the difference so wide, or of such importance, that you anathematize all those who cannot see as you see. If you will not own any for a church of Christ but those that are in all things exactly conformed to the word of God, you must deny that character to most of the churches of Asia ; for many of them were wanting in many things ; nevertheless, Christ owns them as his churches ; and we may as well say, that there is not a Christian exists upon earth, because there is none free of sin ; but, if you admit that this or that man may be a real Christian, though not perfect in the same parity of reason, this or that society may be a real church of Christ, though many blemishes are to be found amongst them. The purity and beauty of the Christian church was, indeed, greatly defaced and obscured by the overspreading of Popery ; but at the Reformation, the Lord graciously and wonderfully delivered his people from that gross darkness that had overspread the professing world ; and he hath enabled them to make a glorious stand in maintaining all the God glorying, and Christ exalting truths of the Gospel ; therefore, you cannot call their articles anti-christian, unless you deny the matter contained in them to be scriptural.

S. That there has been some degree of reformation, I am far from denying ; however, it may be compared to Lazarus rising from the dead with his grave cloaths on ; for they are yet in their dead anti-christian forms of creeds, and confessions of faith, which many of them subscribe, and yet preach contrary to ; and however they differ among themselves, they all agree in rejecting the Scriptures, and substitute their several standards as the bonds of their union,

union, instead of the word of God ; neither can their members be known as the disciples of Christ by keeping his commandments, and as they are distinctly founded on their human compositions, and not on the writings of the Apostles and Prophets, therefore we cannot look on them as the churches of Christ.

C. Indeed, brother, you are like the good man in his mistake, who thought that all the people of God was buttoned up in his own coat ; but I humbly think, that we may apply to this age the Apostle's observation. Rom. xi. 5. *Even so then, at this present time, there is a remnant according to the election of grace,* who have a likeness in many things to the first churches : but that there are imperfections adhering to them cannot be denied, yet of some of them we ought to make a difference ; your judging them all unworthy of the Christian name, is liable to be construed as the language of those who say, *Stand by, for I am holier than you.* You seem to profess a strong attachment to the Bible in opposition to all Creeds, and in this you are not singular ; there are some who, from a good intention, will subscribe no articles, even though plainly deduced from the Bible, while others refuse subscription to articles from a principle of free-thinking, and to eradicate all divine truth out of the world, while at the same time they discover an inclination of imposing their own tenets as articles of religion upon others ; thus Satan and his emissaries have less or more, in all ages, endeavoured to obtrude upon the church, articles of religion most absurd and blasphemous ; which is the grand reason why some honest, though weak minds, are against all such forms of unity ; and if all professors had always been of one mind touching the truths of the Gospel, there would be no need for such a medium, the Bible being both full and explicit in all things respecting faith and worship ; but as it has been long otherwise, it was and is needful ; for the unity and purity of the church, to publish in creeds, or such like

like forms, our faith in Christ, according to the true meaning of the words used by the Holy Ghost in the Scriptures ; and however you may censure this conduct, yet you and all societies do fix a certain sense to some part of the Bible, and receive none into your fellowship but such as agree with your view of the Scriptures ; therefore your charge falls equally on yourselves ; viz. that your sense of the word is the bond of your unity, and not the testimony of God ; but if your private judgment and the public confessions are the very meaning of the Scripture, then you are all united in the truth of the Gospel ; and, if we examine the principles of the churches of England, Scotland, and most of the Dissenters, we shall find that they are all agreed in the essential and internal parts of Christianity, *and are built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, Ephes. xi. 20.* Your observing that many who are zealous of creeds are very strenuous of points which are contrary to the Scriptures ; but if their creeds contain no such thing, it is rather an argument for than against them, and only proves, that those who confess with their mouth things which they do not believe in their hearts, are men of no conscience ; and the truth is, such persons are so far from supporting, that they are for breaking those bands of unity asunder ; and all those who cavil with a form of sound words, are either ignorantly or designedly opening a door for free-thinking and infidelity, which very much prevails, partly owing to the unhappy divisions among the people of God, who differ not so much about the truth, but for want of the Spirit of truth, and love of Jesus, which covers a multitude of failings.

S. I would not have you imagine that we think, that God hath no people but those who join with us ; but as it was in the Prophets days, they were not known to him by their zeal for the Lord's worship ; so in our day, as they appear not to us by their belief of the truth and separation from all anti-christian

societies, we can neither know them nor love them as the disciples of Christ. I own that to require others to agree to our views of the Scriptures, is the same as to oblige them to subscribe creeds; but the Gospel church is founded on this grand and leading truth, viz. That Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and members are received on their belief and confession, that God hath raised him from the dead, and are afterwards more fully taught the import of God's word; but if they shall prove, opposed to the laws of Christ, they are then to be dealt with according to the divine rule, Matth. xviii. and xx. This is the plain and simple way of our churches, which have nothing to do with your anti-christian standards, neither verbal nor written, which serves to support men in their self-righteousness and formality more than to unite them in the truth of the Gospel.

C. Then, according to your judgment, there is no such thing as a visible Christian community, saving your own; but your conduct puts you on a level with others, for *thou that judgest another, doth the self-same things*, Rom. ii. 1. If your societies hold only but one article as necessary to be believed, and so leave your several members to explain it as they please, they would be so far from being like a church of Christ, who think and speak the same things, that they would much more resemble the builders of Babel, who knew not what their neighbours said. There are many who pretend great esteem for the Bible, but will detach from it the personal and mediatorial glory of Christ; and men of this cast will readily confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and died a sacrifice for our sins; but if you will insist, that Christ must be acknowledged to be the eternal and co-equal Son of God, and that he died in the law place of his people, this would be tying them up to your sense of the Scripture, and acting upon the footing of a creed which you condemn in others, although it makes neither you nor them culpable; for if nothing more is required to be believed than what

what is the real sense of the divine word, then your principles are solely founded on the Scriptures, and not simply on either verbal or written standards; and yet, considering the great departure from the Christian faith, such things are needful; for there can be no unity in the faith without such a conduct; and all societies, whether divine or human, have a right to deny entrance to such as do not agree to the terms of their unity, and to exclude all those who shall act in any thing contrary to their received principles, and your dealing with the delinquent according to Matth. chap. xviii. is no more than what is done by many of the Dissenting churches, and in a more agreeable way to the spirit of the Gospel than yourselves, who often exclude some of your members for imaginary evils, which hath no existence but in the capricious humour of the offended, and no regard had to the Apostle's direction. Gal. vi. 1. *If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye that are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering yourselves, lest ye also be tempted,* and your denying admission after the second time being excluded, is contrary both to the spirit and letter of the Scripture, Matth. xviii. 21, 22. and if we were under the influence of the forgiving love of Christ, we should readily forgive and chearfully receive our repenting brother, even unto seventy times seven; and thote societies who follow this rule are, in this case, more like the New Testament church than yours; but suppose you are more scriptural, can it support you in casting off all affection for those that believe in the same Jesus, walk in the same consecrated way, in hope of the same glory, through Christ, with yoo. Fear, brother, lest you be found one of those *who sit and speak against their own mother's children,* Psal. 1. with whom the Lord graciously condescends to keep fellowship, as is evident by his sealing his word among them with the communications of his grace, and the manifestations of his love; therefore we ought to esteem it our great honour and

happiness, more or less, to have fellowship with all such, whether they be of the church of England, Scotland, or others.

S. But, neighbour, you have forgot that we are enjoined to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them, and to come out from amongst them, lest we partake of their plagues ; if you will be so unbelieving as to run the hazard of all this, do not attempt to perswade others, by pretending that your clients are favoured with great revelations from God ; but, while you continue to set down your frames, and feelings, and heart, work for Christian experience, we have ground to look upon you as full of yourselves, and the spirit of enthusiasm, and void of the presence and power of the Gospel spirit.

C. I am surprized to hear you speak of the impressions that grace makes on the heart of unbelievers with such an air of prophanity, which is very unbecoming those who aim to reform us, according to the Scripture ; and it gives some reason to think, that you deny the operations of God on the heart, which are the first seeds of all vital religion, and the root of all Gospel obedience ; but in your light, Christianity is a mere speculative, lifeless, external thing ; possibly you think to gain some of those to your profession, who brand all serious godliness with the hideous name of enthusiasm ; but what advantage shall they gain by believing your doctrine ? For *except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God,* John iii. And can the heart of stone be taken away, and all the powers of the soul shaken, brought from death to life, and out of darkness into marvellous light ; can, I say, all this be done, and the person feel nothing of it ; for, although the Lord speaks to some with a still small voice, and draws them in a gentle way, yet they are both made to hear his voice and taste his love, influencing them to a suitable conduct ; and as there can be no gracious action, without there be first gracious principle, so there can be

be no such principle, where it is not less or more felt, exciting the soul to a spiritual conversation : and, brother, if you know nothing of this, give me leave to say, that you must yet be in the possession of the *strong man, whose goods are in peace*; but I hope better things of you, although your words gender only evil, and will not reconcile the Deist to the word of Revelation ; for, although such men love to hear internal religion stigmatized, yet the more observing of them will only avail themselves in their infidelity by the jarrings of professors about the essential parts of Christianity ; they well know, that the work of the spirit of God internally on the soul, in order to salvation, is a principal doctrine of the Scriptures, attested by the experience of all the Saints; but if all this is chimeras, then it must follow, that the Prophets, Apostles, and all that stand recorded in Scripture, were mere enthusiasts, which is the conclusion that the Deist draws, and naturally arises from your premises ; but I perswade myself that you abhor the thought, and I heartily wish that you may never support any point that is consequential of it.

S. I thank you, neighbour, for your favourable thoughts of me ; and I assure you, that though we cannot agree with the popular notion of heart work, yet we verily believe, according to the Scriptures, the absolute necessity and irresistible efficacy of the Holy Ghost, in the conversion and salvation of all that believe in Christ Jesus unto eternal life, and that their divine grace is only in and by the word communicated to the elect. The truth of which, is only known by terminating in obedience to the commands of Christ ; but as the societies which you plead for are all zealous of their own righteousness, and build their hope of acceptance with God on a supposed superiority to others, and all of them disregard the authority of Christ, who hath enjoined his followers to *observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded*; therefore we cannot view them in any other light than that of self-righteous and anti christian, being neither founded

founded on, nor walking in, obedience to the Gospel.

C. I am well pleased, brother, to hear you speak so fully on the work of the Holy Spirit; your brethren are generally thought to oppose this truth, therefore it would be well if it were more the subject of your public ministry; and I can see no difference in our views, save it be the terms we express ourselves under; and were we more in humility and love, thinking of and speaking to each other, I should have had no occasion to observe, that the terms anti-christian, self-righteous, and Pharisee, are very popular phrases with your brethren, which they apply to all that differ from them; a glaring proof that they think themselves much better than all those whom they thus defame, and looks as if they were destitute of that *charity that thinketh no evil, and judgeth others better than themselves*, 1 Cor. xiii. The grand and sole design of Christianity is to display the glory of God, in delivering fallen man from the guilt and power of sin, by the application of Christ's righteousness, and the communication of his grace forming them into the Divine image in *righteousness and true holiness*, Eph. iv. 24. And what point is maintained by any of the forementioned communities that is contrary to this view of the Gospel? Do they not all expressly declare, that their confidence for acceptance with God is alone in the righteousness of the blessed Jesus; and do they not all profess their dependance on the Holy Spirit for his benign influence, to enlighten, enliven, and enable them to persevere in well-doing, through faith unto eternal salvation, as may be seen at large in their public standards, and other writings? What then but ignorance would brand them with the name of anti-christian? Neither can your other charge belong to them; the self-righteous Pharisees are such as dream they are holier than other men; but those you oppose solemnly deny this, confessing with David, that we are *conceived in sin, and shapen in iniquity*,

quity, Psal. li. acknowledging that *all our righteousness is as filthy rags*, Isai. lxiv. 6. The Pharisee's righteousness is all outward and external ; they are perfect strangers and enemies to heart religion, regarding only some lesser things, but omitting *the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith*, Matth. xxiii. 23. You will know that those whom you chiefly oppose are strenuous for inward holiness, and assert, that none are savinely acquainted with Christianity, unless it reach the heart, and make deep impressions on their souls, forming them into the will of God ; how then can such be compared to Pharisees ?—Do they not rather deserve that character, who make a great fuss about external obedience, but can sport themselves with internal religion, and as the case stands betwixt your societies and others, who have mercy and love for you, but you have none for them, it appears evident that the Pharisee falls on your side. As to your saying we disregard the commands of Christ, till you point at any one moral or evangelical precept that is wilfully omitted, we shall look on it as coming from that spirit which is the accuser of the brethren. All that have tasted that the Lord is gracious do agree, that it is their indispensable duty to act in all things according to his will, and chearfully conform to every institution in the light in which they see it ; and all who observe Gospel ordinances, with faith in Christ, are his disciples, and ought to be regarded as such. It is from this consideration, that the Apostle exhorts us to Christian forbearance. Rom. iv. 6. *He that regardeth a day, regardeth it to the Lord ; he that regardeth not the day unto the Lord, he doth not regard it ; he that eateth, eateth unto the Lord, for he giveth God thanks ; and he that eateth not unto the Lord, he eateth not, and giveth God thanks ;* both parties acted with an eye to the glory of God, and all that follow this rule are accepted of God in Christ ; but they who strenuously contend for the original modes, to the neglect of judgment, mercy, and faith, are in the spirit of the

the Pharisees, who justified themselves, and condemned others. Whether this may be applied to any professing the Christian name, I leave to your own judgment.

S. Nay, neighbour, as your religion lies much in application, it will be easier for you to apply your own observation than for me, whose Christianity consists not in such stuff, but in a simple belief, and a practical conformity to the truth. You take great pains to establish a good opinion of yourself, and those of your own complexion ; but it is like an attempt to wash the Ethiopian white ; for the Pharisee appears in your fallacious and perplexing definition of faith, which sets us to seek for some good thing in ourselves, on which we may believe that Christ is ours. Thus many, who have the Gospel faith, are brought into distress, because they cannot find any good thing in themselves to support the popular claim ; while others are deceiving themselves, by imagining that there are some gracious work in them, which makes them better than others, and is a bottom for their faith, instead of the testimony of God, and the grace of the gospel, all owing to your anti-christian notion of faith, built on your self-righteousness.

C. We think that none are in earnest about religion, who do not want the truths and precious promises of the Bible applied home to their hearts by the Holy Ghost ; we freely own this is what we want, as absolutely needful to vital, experimental, and practical Christianity ; but my design is not that you might form a more favourable idea of us, but that you might be more in the exercise of Christian charity ; and I should have great hopes of success, if you dealt less in censuring, and applying odious epithets to your neighbours. Your heavy charge is founded on bad premises ; the popular faith (as you call it) flows from a soul convinced by the Holy Spirit, that there is nothing but the depths of sin and guilt in itself, and is in this apprehension led out of itself by that

that same blessed Spirit to take refuge in Christ, as he is revealed in the Gospel, Isai. xxvii. 13. Acts ii. 37. I do not hesitate to assert, that there is a work of God on the soul previous to the acting of faith; but this work is not the warrant of faith, nor is it so much as apprehended by the sinner in coming to, or believing on Christ. Acts ii. 37. Acts xvi. 30. *What shall I do to be saved?* Nothing is seen but guilt and misery, and there must be, and is, what may be called the faith of the law, before there can be the faith of the Gospel; by the former, the sinner sees his wretched state, and is filled with dread and anguish of soul; by the Gospel faith, they see an all-sufficient Saviour, and are filled with joy and peace in believing; hence we read, 2 Cor. iii. 6. *The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life;* and that you may see that our view of this grand point is founded on truth, I shall attempt to sum up the whole account of it as it is contained in the Scriptures. And first, It is the indispensable duty of all that hear the Gospel to repent, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Mark i. 15. Rom. xvi. 26. Secondly, The word of the Gospel is the grand medium, or instrument, which God blesseth, to the production of faith in the hearts of sinners. Rom. x. 17. Thirdly, The Lord, the Spirit, is the only efficient cause of saving faith. Col. ii. 13. Fourthly, The only warrant and sure foundation of Gospel faith is, the declaration, promise, and faithfulness of God. Zech. ix. 12. Heb. vi. 18. Fifthly, Christ, and him crucified for our sins, and risen again for our justification and eternal life in him, is the great object of the Christian faith. Isai. xlvi. 22. John xx. 31. Rom. iv. 23. Sixthly, The being and act of faith consists in a full persuasion of the mind, touching the truth of all that is said in the Scripture, concerning Jesus Christ, and in a full and hearty receiving of him, in all his offices, and in a single dependence on him for all the concerns of soul and body, in time and eternity. John vii. 69. John xi. 12. 2 Cor. x. 5. 2 Tim. i. 12. Seventhly.

The true and certain effects of the internal being of this divine faith is a reverential fear of God, and love to holiness, a supreme delight in Jehovah, and warm desires after conformity to him; a high esteem of Christ's word, and unfeigned love of all his people, with an endeavour after obedience to all that he hath commanded. Matth. xxvii. 20. Rom. vii. 22. 1 Pet. i. 8. Phil. iii. 10. Lastly, The end of this faith is, that all and every one who are the subjects of it are certainly interested in all the merits of Christ, and shall be eternally saved. Acts x. 43. This is that faith which the Scriptures calls us to the acknowledgment of ; and none of the consequences which you charge it with, can be drawn from it; neither hath any of the preachers of this faith, who have attempted to give us some marks and evidences of saving grace, with a view to unveil the hypocrite, and to assist the doubtful in drawing a comfortable conclusion concerning their state in grace, (none of them, I say) have ever directed us to seek for some good in ourselves, prior to, and as a ground of, our faith ; but the sum of all their writings is to engage us to see whether our faith has these effects, which in a lesser or greater degree do always accompany, and flow from, saving faith. If this is what you call popular, I heartily wish that it were more so, being fully assured, that it is the faith of God's elect, and administers no just cause of grief to the serious, nor encouragement to the prophanes ; but if it should not be agreeable to what you conceive on this point, is the difference so great as to justify you in railing against all that do not view it in your light ; such a conduct, brother, bespeaks your brethren to have very little of that faith which works by love ; jarings about experimental religion tend only to confirm the enemies of the Gospel in their wicked surmise, that Christianity is all a fiction ; for if we were more under the power of the truth, as it is in Jesus, we should not unchristian one another for differing in externals, nor for placing a word wrong

wrong even in things of moment. May the God of love pour his love into all our hearts, that evil speaking may for ever subside, and that all denominations may be known to be the genuine disciples of Christ, by their unfeigned love one towards another.

S. I heartily join with you in wishing, that the Lord may revive his work, and lead his people into every truth; that Ephraim may not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim, which, as you have observed, greatly corroborates with the natural prejudices of men against their receiving the Gospel; but as the face of Christianity is now so miserably disfigured, and its very life almost extinguished, we think that embracing such a form of religion, which is opposed to the Scriptures, makes the state of men respecting their eternal interest no better, but really worse; as is the case with all the opposite parties under the Christian name; therefore, it is high time to impugn the popular errors with a becoming zeal, and to rouse up some from their supine indifference and false charity, by which they have winked at many things, which they know are contrary to the Gospel. The doctrine of the atonement is the distinguishing and important point in Christianity; a mistake about this greatly affects every part of it, and is very dishonouring to God, and hazardous to the salvation of men; therefore we ought to have the most distinct and clear views of Christ's mediation, and our eyes always fixed on him as the Lord, our righteousness and strength.

I readily admit of some things which you have hinted concerning faith; nevertheless, your account of it is much soured with the popular leaven, as it leads men to trust in their receiving of the truth, more than in the truth itself, which is to rely on their own doings, and is of the same quality with that which the Apostle calls a perverting of the Gospel of Christ.

C. We are agreed, that Jesus Christ the Lord, our righteousness, is the alone ground of the sinner's con-

fidence towards God, and the way in which this truth is viewed, has a strong influence on the whole of our Christian profession ; and it, indeed, argueth great lukewarmness and indifference to the blessed Jesus, in any that can stand unconcerned at the violent attacks made on the grand and leading articles of our holy religion. It is good always to be zealously affected in a good thing. Gal. iv. 18. but when our zeal is overheated and fiery, it then seems not to flow from the grace of the Gospel, neither can it promote the righteousness of God. True Christian zeal is concerned for every part of the truth ; and as the work of the Lord, the Spirit on the hearts of sinners of mankind, flows from, and through the righteousness of Christ ; it therefore earnestly contends for the doctrine of effectual calling, in connection with the forgiveness of sins, without using bitter invectives, but is gentle even to those that oppose the truth, being equally careful to preserve the spirit and temper of the Gospel, which is love, as well as the truth of the word ; but as the zeal of your brethren respects only part of the truth, and is fraughted with contempt of those whom you call Pharisees, it gives ground to think, that it is not according to knowledge ; and I verily think, that many of those whom you oppose have put the doctrine of the atonement and gospel faith in a more scriptural light than any of your brethren have yet done, of which I have given you a faint shadow ; but I am not so attached either to my own or any man's way, as not to change it for what I think is better. If your account of faith appears less exceptionable, please to favour me with it, and I shall readily adopt it.

S. What I have already said concerning faith might suffice ; but for your fuller satisfaction, I shall be more explicit, and must observe, that the word faith hath been miserably tortured, and cast into various forms ; some have called it the eyes, hands, and feet of the soul, and by a multitude of words have rendered that doubtful, which, in its native meaning, is level

level to the meanest capacity; and the plain and obvious sense of the word faith is to be fully persuaded, that this or that doctrine, or thing which is reported to us is true, and the Scripture does most manifestly suppose, that this term is to be understood in the same sense, both in temporal and spiritual things. *1 John v. 9. If we receive the testimony of man, the testimony of God is greater.* Thus we see, that to receive a testimony as true, whether it be human or divine, is the very nature of faith; and we must say, whenever a person believes, and is convinced of the truth of any testimony, he therein and thereby becomes possessed of a truth, and that truth becomes his faith; and the definition which Calvin, that valuable reformer, gives of faith is very clear and exact, as he thus writes: " We shall have a just definition of faith, if we say, that it is a firm and certain knowledge or persuasion of the good-will of God to us, which is founded upon the truth of the free promise in Christ, revealed to the mind, and sealed to our hearts by the Holy Spirit."

C. I greatly rejoice to hear you speak with so much regard of any of our worthies, which is an evidence of your impartiality, of which the Sandemanians in general are very destitute, as is too evident by their disrespectful treatment of some of the best writers, both antient and modern, charging them with leading us the very contrast to the Gospel, by their clouded and legal descriptions of faith as your friends call it; but, however they have endeavoured to blacken their names, they shall still shine as stars in the church, being dead, they yet speak; and I see nothing dark or dangerous, in comparing faith to the active parts of the body; their aim in this seems to have been to caution us against resting in the shadow or notion of faith, without the substance; to this end they liken faith to the natural eye, which being intensely fixed, the object hath a kind of existence in the mind. Thus the scholar imitates his copy, and so the Christian runs the right way when he is looking

looking unto Jesus ; and as by the proper use of the feet we are brought nearer to that which we were at a distance from, so by faith the soul goes from self and all things to Jesus Christ, and finds in him a deliverance from every evil, and the enjoyment of every blessing ; hence faith is expressed under the term *Come unto me.* Matth. xi. 28. Again, by the hands we take hold of material things, so by faith we lay hold of the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the sum and center of eternal life. In this light they are so far from being weak, and having a tendency to mislead, that they very beautifully illustrate saving faith, which gives us a degree of enjoyment of all the blessings connected with the truth or object believed in, and so much is intended. Heb. xi. 1. may be read thus :—*Now faith is the real enjoyment of the very substance or essence of all the blessings hoped for, and the full and clear evidence of all things reported in the word and testimony of God;* hence we read, Heb. iv. *We that believe do enter into rest.* For by faith Christ dwells in the believer, and the believer in Christ ; so that faith is not only an assurance of the reality of divine things, but is also the foretaste of eternal life in Christ Jesus, 1 Pet. ii. 3. And as you have concluded your account of faith with the words of the great Calvin, which strongly implies an assurance of interest, and includes neither more nor less than what those whom you oppose say concerning it. On the whole, therefore, I can see no difference betwixt you and the popular preachers on this point, save that you express it in other words, which is very trifling, and infinitely below the spirit of a Christian to make it a bone of contention, and a ground of separation from those that believe the truth as it is in Jesus.

S. Whatever pains you take to support the uncouth similes of your preachers, you will never be able to reconcile them to the Gospel view of faith ; for they call that which is the effect the thing itself, and thus they mislead their followers. The phrase, *Believing on Christ,* which frequently occurs in the Scriptures,

Scriptures, sometimes means no more than believing the Gospel of Christ ; but wherever it means more, it is the same with coming, receiving and leaning on Christ, and the like active terms ; and if we observe with what affection a person, who is in want, comes to a generous benefactor for a supply, upon a free invitation, or one that is in danger runs to an open and safe shelter, or one that is needy receives a free gift, you will easily discern, that this is the same kind of affection with which a sinner, persuaded of the free grace of God, comes to Christ, leans on him, and the like ; from this it follows, that these actings of the mind are acts of love to God in Christ, which flows from the belief of the truth, and not acts of faith in order to justification ; the person is actually justified before he exerts any of the aforesaid acts. In justifying faith it is the free grace of the Gospel alone that pacifies the conscience, and creates love in the heart ; but this working of the affections cannot be proved to be sincere, without a suitable conduct in that self-denied obedience required in the word ; and the various parts of this obedience may be most properly termed acts of faith ; and take notice of Heb. xi. then query, How did Noah prove that he believed the overthrow of the world ? &c. *By faith, Noah being warned of God of things not seen, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house.* And if we should go over the whole chapter, the same answer would be returned ; but let this suffice to point out the acts of faith that are properly scriptural, and infinitely greater proofs of our believing in Christ, than any of those inward feelings and impressions, by which many hope to be satisfied of their own personal interest in Christ.

C. indeed, brother, I humbly think if you were under a proper influence, Divine operations would not be to you terms of ridicule, nor would you plume yourself in supposing, that your brethren are singular in the belief of that which no Christian disputes. We account no feelings, frames, impressions, nor faith itself,

itself, to be genuine and Divine, unless they purify the heart, and form the soul and life into the will of God ; for *without works, faith is dead.* James ii. 17. but if you assert, that the commands of Christ can be rightly observed, without a Divine change on the soul, then your words would reprove him, who hath said, *First make the tree good, and then the fruit will be good.* Your saying, that the terms receiving, coming, and the like spiritual actions, are only things that flow from true faith, is not yet proved ; that faith is very distinguishable from its effects is certain, but that coming and the like, are only things that flow from true faith is what cannot be supported ; for in the Scripture the aforesaid phrases are used in a synonymous sense, as John i. 12. *As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.* John vii. and xxxvii. *If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink ; he that believeth in me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters.* Nothing is more evident, than that coming, receiving, trusting, and the like expressions, are, in the Scripture sense, expressive of the necessary and essential parts of saving faith ; if the bare believing that the Gospel is a real truth constitutes a believer, and is saving faith, then it must follow, that all natural men, who believe the Gospel to be a truth, are believers, and shall be saved ; for salvation is inseparably connected with believing in the Scripture sense of the word ; but we read, that many who not only had the faith that you speak of, but even professed and preached the Gospel, to whom Christ will say, *Depart from me, I know you not,* Luke xiii. therefore, that faith that is to the saving of the soul, is more than a bare persuasion that the Bible is the word of God. Your saying, that the person is actually justified before coming to Christ ; and to come to him, in order to find peace with God, is, you say, contrary to the freedom of grace. This, brother, implies, that persons are justified before they believe, and have

have peace with God when at a distance from Christ; which is the very contrast to Acts xvi. 31. *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved;* being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; for although we are not justified for our believing, yet it is certain that none are justified but in believing, and Christ calls the weary to come unto him, that they may find rest to their souls, Matth. xi, and to lay hold on my strength, and you shall be at peace with me, Isai. xxvii. which proves, that coming to Christ for the pardon of our sins, &c. is so far from being opposed to the tenor of grace, that the very essence of unbelief consists in not receiving, and coming to Christ for life, peace, and salvation, John vii. *Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life.*

You justly observe, that it is the free grace of God that pacifies the conscience; this is truly evangelical, but is contrary to what you have said of faith; for a sinner cannot enjoy the Gospel peace without an application of the righteousness of Christ to his soul, which enables him in some measure to believe, that Christ is his; and thus your own similitude very aptly illustrates the Gospel, as it is a free invitation to mankind, sinners, to come to the most kind and generous benefactor Jesus Christ, who is able and willing to supply all our wants in coming to him; but those that do not see their need, or doubt whether this invitation is made to them, will not come to, or believe in him; thus you have confirmed the faith which you thought to overturn.

You charge some writers with putting the effect for the thing itself; but you yourself have done this, which appears in a glaring light by your observations on Heb. xi. But after all that you have said, I still think, that the proper acts of saving faith terminate solely on God in Christ, his blood and righteousness, the fulness and freeness of his grace, his promise, power, and faithfulness set forth in the words of truth; the effects and works of faith in-

ternally are the humbling of the soul, the setting of the affections on, and the subjecting the will in obedience to Christ.

The works of faith externally are obedience in bearing and doing the will of God unto the end; and the aforesaid chapter presents us with many glorious instances of the working of faith, triumphing over all opposition, both of earth and Hell. If you were not prejudiced in favour of your own opinion, you would have queried and answered thus: What was the impulsive cause of Noah's making the ark? Answer, *By faith, Noah being warned of God, of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house.* Thus we see, that it was his being persuaded of personal danger that moved him to fear, and his belief of personal deliverance that prompted him to build an ark at the command of God; and that which animated the saints in all their noble acts, was the faith of their personal interest in the love, mercy, and care, of a faithful covenant keeping God, as appears from this chapter and the whole testimony of Scripture.

S. You remind me of the vulgar proverb, "As the fool thinks, the bell clinks;" you have imbibed such a notion of faith, as includes personal interest, so that you pervert all that I say, to support your heretical thoughts about believing; but it is certain, that faith is neither more or less than a persuasion of the mind, that the things reported to us are true. In believing our assent is not grounded merely on the reasonableness, nor on our interest in the things related, but solely on the veracity of the reporter; hence it is, that many things that are prodigies are surely believed, even by those who think themselves masters of reason, on the mere probity of the informer, which is an awful proof of the great degeneracy of men, who readily credit what fallen mortals declare, but will not believe what God in the most solemn manner makes known to us, unless they can see the reasonableness of it; nevertheless, wisdom

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is justified of her children, who are fully perswaded of the truth of all things contained in the Scriptures, on the bare record of God. I have before observed, that *faith* bears the same signification in spiritual as in temporal things ; if it were not so, the Bible might as well be in an unknown language, the common reader would be absolutely misled by it, as every one would necessarily take it in the general use of the word in which he used to understand it, and it is a word of no doubtful signification ; it always means believing or being convinced of the truth of any thing testified to us ; and till you can fully prove, that something more is implied in our common use of the word *faith* than what I have now observed, I shall still believe, that nothing more is intended by the word as it stands in the Scriptures.

C. That the word *faith* bears the same sense in Divine as in human things is true ; but it must be observed, that our meaning of it is always according to the nature of the report ; if the things have no aspect upon us, neither as to good or evil, we mean no more by the word *faith*, than a bare assent of the mind ; but if the report engrosseth us, and all our affairs, we do not give credit to the thing, unless we believe our personal concern in it ; so then, by the word *faith* in such a report, we express not only our assent, but also our personal connection with the thing testified. This is the two obvious senses in which the word is used in common things ; it is in this last view of the term that we are in the Gospel called to believe, and that because there is nothing in Christianity which is, or ought to be, deemed foreign to us ; therefore, a bare assent to the things contained in the Scriptures, falls greatly short of that *faith* which the Gospel enjoins, and comes not up to the common use of the word in worldly things that are somewhat similar, as thus : If any man were to promise to do this or that for you, could you say that you believed him, if you be not perswaded that he will act according to his engagement ; for it

is most certain, that in all free and positive declarations of the like nature, we do not believe them unless we are assured that they shall be made good to us, and our assurance is the stronger according to the knowledge we have of the ability and veracity of the person engaged; therefore it is evident, that we do not recede from the true sense and common use of the word faith, in all things that are of an interesting nature, when we say, that assurance of personal interest is necessarily implied, and essential to faith, when proportioned to the Gospel testimony, which is inculcated on us. And this would appear in a glaring light, if the several articles of our holy religion were duly considered, as thus: That God made all things, knows all things, and is omnipresent, filling all places at one and the same time, governing and preserving all creatures, &c. no person can believe this without including himself as being created, preserved, and all his thoughts and actions under the inspection of his all-wise Creator. We do not give credit to the Scripture account of the imputation of Adam's sin to all his posterity, the universal depravity of human nature, &c. unless we believe, that we are involved in his sin, guilt, and pollution; the impotence of man to do any thing of himself acceptable to God, the delivering of himself from that eternal wrath to which, through sin, they are obnoxious; this, I say, will not be adhered to, unless we are fully convinced, that all we do is sin, and under the curse of the law. We do not believe the testimony of the Gospel concerning that fall, and complete redemption which is in Christ Jesus, and the free and sure promise of eternal salvation made in Christ to all and every sinner that shall believe in him, unless we are assured that it hath a favourable aspect on us personally. I might also remind you of the resurrection of the dead, and the general judgment, which cannot be received as they ought to be, unless we believe ourselves personally concerned in them; but what I have said, I humbly think, may suffice.

suffice to shew, that personal interest is certainly contained less or more in the nature of saving faith.

Give me leave to add, that as in believing we necessarily apply to ourselves things believed, that this is one reason, if not the greatest, why the gentlemen whom you pointed at are so hardy as to disregard the testimony of God; for if the report concerning the depravation of men, and the necessity of another's righteousness, to justify them before God, did only respect those that are notoriously profligate and abandoned creatures, those who imagine they are more righteous than these publicans. They, I say, would readily subscribe to the things aforesaid; but as they cannot believe the Gospel testimony, without viewing themselves on a level with the chief of sinners, therefore they disregard that truth which stains their pretended rectitude, and moral righteousness, which they set up in opposition to the righteousness of God; although many of them do believe the Gospel truths concerning the life, death, and resurrection of Christ, and in your sense of faith, they are true believers; but the Christian faith is the act of the whole soul, under the operation of the Holy Ghost, and hath to do with Christ for its own salvation, as held forth in the word of God; and even the weakest believers tremble at his word, for *they fear the Lord and his goodness*, Hosea iii. 5. wondering that he hath not poured out the vials of his just displeasure on their guilty heads, and stand adoring the riches of his amazing and undeserved mercy, flowing through the atoning blood of our dear Lord Jesus Christ; and being enabled by the unction of the Holy Ghost, to see the inexpressible beauty, the infinite fulness, and the admirable suitableness that there is in Christ to redeem them from all their miseries, and richly supply all their wants. In this view, they are enabled to cast themselves, and all the burden of their sins upon him; and as they increase in the strength and exercise of faith, through the power of the Holy Ghost, they have more full discoveries of Christ in

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all his offices and relations to them ; and being sensible of their gross ignorance of God and themselves, they depend on, and submit to, him as their prophet for wisdom and understanding ; and conscious of their complicated guilt, they receive and rest upon him, as their great high priest, for pardon and justification, through his atoning blood and perfect righteousness, and sensible of their absolute impotence, spiritual thraldom, and powerful enemies, they are enabled to submit to him in his kingly office, depending solely on him for deliverance, and powerful grace to the subduing of their hearts, to do his revealed will, and cheerfully submit to his providential will, from a firm perswasion that he doth all things well. This is the faith that the Gospel enjoins, and is the instrument in the hand of the Lord, the Spirit, of begetting joy and peace in the hearts of all those who are turned from darkness to light, and from trusting in their own righteousness to the Lord Jesus Christ, *who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*, Rom x. 4. Nothing short of this, in some degree, is true Gospel faith, even that faith which the saints recorded in the Scriptures were partakers of. See Phil. iii. 8. Gal. ii. 19, 20. 1 Cor. i. 30. Isai. xxvi. 13. and thus it is evident, that not only an assent, or full perswasion of the mind touching the truth of all that is revealed concerning Christ, but also a hearty receiving of him, dependence upon him, and subjection to him, are all essential to the being of that faith which is unto salvation.

S. What you have now observed holds true in most things hinted at ; but I cannot see, that because God hath sent his Son into the world, therefore all that receive the Gospel have ground to believe their personal interest in him. This would be to deny the doctrine of election and particular redemption, which are truths contained in the Bible ; and if all are enjoined to believe, that they are personally interested in Christ, and shall be saved, then some are commanded to believe a lie, which is such an absurdity,

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sufficiently proves the fallacy of your notion of faith. To be told that God is freely gracious, that he gave his Son to die to save the chief of sinners, that he is the Christ, is risen from the dead, that God is well pleased in him, and the like, are truths of general concern, and the belief of them have nothing of personal assurance, or of special interest; for what is set before us in the word to be believed for salvation is true in itself, whether we believe it or not.

C. If the Gospel hath no special and certain aspect on the eternal concern of every individual who are called to regard it, then the believing or not believing is of very little consequence; for we are required to believe that which we have no particular interest in, and the grace of the word is not to be viewed as belonging to us. The doctrines of eternal election and particular redemption are so fully and plainly revealed, that none who reads the Bible with any attention can doubt their validity, without doing violence to their own understanding, as well as the sacred text; but these things are not proposed to us in the Gospel, in order to our believing in Christ; for election is not the object of saving faith, in believing the soul is led, sooner or later, to see it as a glorious privilege in Christ Jesus; but they do not believe in it as the ground of their salvation, Christ alone being the only object of their faith, and the foundation of this and all other privileges, which are unto eternal life; neither is the word and free promise of mercy, which is preached unto sinners, built on election, nor on universality, nor the speciality of Christ's death, but on the fulness, freeness, and virtuality of his merits, *whereby he is able to save to the uttermost, all that come unto God by him, Heb. vii. 25.* And every one who are convinced of their guilty state, and of the Gospel salvation, they, as under the influence of grace, stand not querying about election, nor the extent of Christ's death, the Spirit of God having opened their eyes to see the freeness, fulness, and suitableness that there is in Christ to relieve.

lieve them. Under this view they are enabled to rest their guilty and impotent souls on him ; from thence they find unspeakable *joy and peace in believing*, Acts xvii. 30. Rom. xv. 13. From this it follows, that neither election, nor the peculiarity of Christ's death, comes properly under the consideration of a sinner's coming to, or believing in Christ ; (for my part, I know nothing of coming to Christ as elected, but as a miserable sinner ; and being enabled, to believe in Christ, I am led to see my election and salvation, not as a consequence of believing, but as the fruit of everlasting love bestowed on worthless men, through the mediation of our glorious Emanuel) nor is election any argument against the convinced sinner believing, that they have remission of sins and salvation in Christ ; for this is the sum of the Gospel. Luke xxiv. 47. *That nepentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations* ; and if we are not to believe, that every one of us hath for ourselves, remission of our sins and eternal life in Christ Jesus, then there is no connection, nor proportion betwixt that faith which the Gospel enjoins, and the truth which it reports to us ; and the believer is yet in his sins, and must seek relief under guilt some other way than in the belief of the truth. Thus your notion of faith deprives the Lambs of Christ of the comfort of that which is the chief blessing of the Gospel, and the Saviour's procurement, viz. *In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins*, Col. i. 14. And your description of faith makes the Gospel of the same tenor with the law, which is to do and live. But the Gospel is to be viewed as an act of indemnity, proceeding from the compassionate heart of our offended God, founded on the infinite righteousness of his Son, Jesus Christ, in which he graciously holds out the remission of sins and final salvation, to all and every one of the sinners of mankind, who shall receive it as a free gift, in, and through the mediation of Christ. *This is the record, that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life*

life is in his Son, 1 John v. 11. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life, and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him, John iii. 36. Thus we see that when all are called to believe in Christ, and that they have life in receiving him; none, I say, are required to assent to a lie; for that God hath given, or held out, eternal life to us sinners, in his Son, is a truth, whether it is believed or not; and it is true of all who are required to believe it, or how could the not believing the testimony of God be making him a liar, if he has not made such a promise or testimony respecting those that never believed? On the whole, as all men are involved under the law charge of guilt, so all men are included under the Gospel declaration of mercy; and all and every one who believeth it, shall find the immense blessings of it terminating on them, in and through our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

John xx. 31.

S. That all men may plead the merits of Christ for the pardon of their sins, is a point that I am far from denying; the Gospel record bears the same aspect on one sinner as on another, treating us all on a level, while it is the most important and interesting to us all; but the Gospel does no where, immediately or directly, declare the special interest of any man now living, therefore such an assurance is groundless and dangerous; and as the Scripture no where declares, that any one now in our world is elected, or that his sins are forgiven, it must be presumption for any one to think so, for the freedom of divine grace, as held forth in the Gospel, is open and common to sinners in general, and therefore cannot warrant any person to believe, that he has a particular interest in Christ.

C. If ever any sinner had, from the Divine declaration of mercy, a sufficient ground to believe their special interest in Christ, then all such sinners have the very same ground now; for the Gospel retains the same fulness and freedom of grace now that it ever did; and it is most clear and certain, that the

assurance of the Saints recorded in the Scriptures was founded on the Divine testimony, and received by faith, viz. *Remember thy word unto thy servant, on which thou hast caused me to hope, Psal. cxix. 49.* I had fainted unless I had believed, to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, *Psal. xxvii. 13.* We believe, that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, *Acts xvi. 11.* and many more Scriptures might be cited of the same import; and the Gospel never did declare to any man, that he had a particular interest in Christ, but under the consideration of his being a believer, and its language is the same now that ever it was. To the unbeliever it says, *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon, Isai. Iv. 6.* And if there is any man now living that believeth in Christ, the Gospel telleth all such, that their iniquities are pardoned, for there is no condemnation to them who are thus in Christ Jesus; and if you do not view those with whom you hold fellowship as believers, then you cannot love them as real Christians; but if you receive them to your community as the genuine friends and members of Christ, why do you say, that the Gospel does not determine the special interest of any man now living, when it so expressly declares to all that now believe: *But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, 1 Cor. vi. 11.* What was written aforetime was written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope, *Rom. xv. 4.* And the Christian hope floweth immediately from faith, and is strengthened according to the degree of it. *Rom. xv. 13.* Now the God of hope fill you and with all joy and peace, in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. Salvation is as inseparably connected with faith now as it was formerly, and therefore all that now believe, according to the Gospel, shall assuredly be saved. Thus

Thus speaketh Job xix. 25. *For I know that my Redemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God.* This is the proper language of faith; and as what the law saith, it saith to them that are under the law, even so all that the Gospel saith, it saith it to all those that now believe the testimony of God, Rom. iii. 21, 22. *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all, and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference.* Thus we see, that the Scripture doth clearly and fully assert, that every one that believeth hath a special interest in Christ; therefore all such have a sufficient ground for their assurance of eternal life in the testimony of God, unless it be dangerous to confide in the bare promise of God revealed to the heart, and contained in the word, and presumption to rely by faith alone on the righteousness of Christ for acceptance with God, without some works done by them to support their hope of eternal life, which is the doctrine of our modern Pharisees, and is inseparably connected with your definition of faith.

Your observing, that as the Gospel is alike open to all sinners, cannot, therefore, warrant any one to believe his particular interest in it. This, I humbly think, is as bad logic as divinity; for if the Gospel is thus tendered, and suitable to all sinners alike, then it certainly warrants all sinners that believe it, to be assured of relief from it; for as all men, severally considered, stand in need of, and enjoy as much of the natural sun as if there were but one person in the world, just so every sinner stands in the same absolute necessity of the same Jesus to bleed and die for him, as if there had been but one sinner to die for; and all that grace and glory, which flows through a crucified and risen Saviour, comes in the Gospel declaration to every sinner personally, and terminates on every individual believer; so that every single Christian

tian may, with great propriety and certainty, say with Apostle, Gal. ii. 20. *The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* To write and preach short of this, is to keep back from the children of light the chief part of the counsel of Heaven, to muzzle the Divine oracle, to nullify and render void the record of God in the most essential and interesting matters.

S. The Scripture insists on many things as necessary to prove our particular interest, all which are declared to be the fruits and effects of faith. If then saving faith be in the mind previous to any of these necessary proofs, how can it be conceived that faith itself should contain a direct persuasion of particular interest? Neither is there any need for such assurance, in order to be a ground of hope; and when any make it the chief support of their mind, they are resting their souls upon what the Scriptures doth not assure them of, and may be deceiving themselves, as many have done.

C. It is an awful truth that many do deceive themselves, and we are all prone to rest in the shadow of things, instead of the substance; but we are sure there can be no deception where the Gospel comes not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, 1 Theff. i. 5. whereby they are helped to view it in its own light, and accept of it in its just importance, without any other evidence of their right to Christ, than what is apprehended and received in believing the testimony of God, and therefore called *the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen*, Heb. xi. 1. And I humbly think, that your observation is groundless; for the Scripture no where speaks of any thing as a direct evidence of interest, but believing, and expressly saith, that *he that believeth hath the witness in himself*, 1 John v. 10. It exhorts us to add to our faith, virtue, and the like, which is useful to prove the divinity of it; yet the Gospel assurance of salvation

tion is not founded on works, but works flow from the assurance of faith, as the effect from the cause; and as all effects serve to evince the nature and force of their causes, even so Gospel obedience corroborateth with saving faith, in witnessing to the truth of that assurance which is received in believing; hence we see the close connection that there is betwixt faith and works, and their joint testimony to the truth of the believers peculiar interest in Christ, and the power of Divine grace in the heart. Faith gives a weight and dignity to all works done under its influence, Heb. xiii. 15, 16. And works are a visible proof, that our faith is not spurious, but genuine and scriptural, James ii. 18. True faith then is a living and influencing principle, acting from the love of Christ shed abroad in the heart; and all the Gospel precepts which believers are enjoined to observe, are founded on the supposition of a special relation, subsisting betwixt Christ and every one of them, as thus: *Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God with your bodies and your spirits, which are his. Be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you,* Eph. iv. 31. *Return ye backsliding children, for I am married unto you, saith the Lord,* Jer. iii. 13. These and many more texts prove, that a personal interest in Christ is received directly upon believing the sacred word, and in some degree exists in the mind prior to any visible fruits flowing from it; for if the Christian is called to the practice of holiness, from the consideration of his peculiar alliance to Christ, then a sense of his special interest, in some degree, is absolutely needful to produce a cheerful, uniform, and evangelical obedience; for that duty, or work, which is not done from a sense of the Divine love terminating on us, through Jesus Christ our Lord, is partly legal, servile, and from the spirit of bondage.

S. Though the Christian faith does not contain a direct persuasion of particular interest, yet the tidings brought

brought us openly in the Gospel are a sufficient stay for our souls, whensoever these truths are believed. We are told in the Gospel, that they convey peace, hope, and comfort to the mind. Thus when the Gentiles heard that Christ was set for a light to them, and that he should be for salvation to the ends of the earth, though not one of them was told of a special interest, yet they being perswaded of the general truth, was glad, and glorified the word of the Lord, Acts xiii. 48. And, surely, there is enough to ease the mind, pacify the conscience, and free it from terrifying fears, upon being told and perswaded, that Jesus is an all-sufficient and entirely free Saviour for lost sinners. This is the faith which the Apostles preached; and it evidently supposes, that there is a sufficient ground of hope, and source of comfort, in this Gospel of the grace of God.

C. As Christ is set forth for a light to the Gentiles in general, and for salvation to the ends of the earth, without any exception to any person or persons under the characters of sinners, as such, therefore every one who hears the Gospel declaration, is warranted, and called to accept of Christ for their own Saviour to the salvation of their souls; and all those who are enabled to lay hold on Christ and eternal life in him for themselves, do glorify the word of the Lord. The Gentiles of whom you spoke were such as appears from the text, *As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.* The sun of righteousness shined into their hearts; in his light they saw light, and were favoured with a view of the Divine mercy, blotting out their sins in particular: this, I say, they saw through their believing in Christ; and therefore they had good reason to be glad; but not according to your notion of faith, which separates special interest in Christ from believing. To hear that Christ is an able and free Saviour cannot be a full ground of joy, if I am not to believe, that he is, and will continue to be, all that unto me which the Divine word declares, it follows, that your faith in the Divine testimony

testimony gives no immediate and certain ground of comfort. Those who view the Gospel as a conditional salvation, agree with you, that it furnisheth all men with sufficient ground of comfort; because, say they, it requires nothing but what may be easily performed; and your account of faith stands in a close connection with salvation on this tenure, which gives no assurance of eternal life, but on the footing of our own obedience. But, if you think that the Gospel is, as it really is, absolute and unconditional, then no person can fully believe it as having a respect to himself, without being perswaded, less or more, of his peculiar interest in it; and all those who pretend to believe the record, and are not thus assured, are such who fear they have not done such things as are sufficient to support their hope; and this legal surmise is the genuine fruit of your faith, and absolutely contrary to the freedom of the Gospel; for *by grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God,* Ephes. ii. 8. Thus it appears, that your definition of faith is inadequate to the testimony of God, and ineffectual to the relief of a distressed soul; but the faith which is of God brings immediate consolation, and is a sovereign balm to every wound of the soul. Thus when the sinner's conscience smarts with guilt, and fears the wrath of God, in believing they are comforted, Rom. v. i. *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.* When conflicting with the world, the flesh, and the Devil, the Christian is supported in believing Christ's word, 2 Cor. xi. 9. *My grace is sufficient for you, my strength is perfected in weakness.* Again, when the believer is approaching to the throne of grace, he is assured of acceptance in believing, that *we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous,* 1. John ii. 1. *Who is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him,* Heb. vii. 25. In a word, the Gospel faith comforts under every discouragement, animates in every duty, enables to hope even against hope, is light

light in darkness, and life in death ; for Christ dwelt in the believers heart by faith, and in believing they know that Christ is theirs, and they are his, Song ii. 15, This is the true faith which the Apostles so laboriously preached, and zealously maintained ; the faith which rejoiced their hearts in the midst of deep tribulation, Rom. v. 3. But the faith you plead for falls greatly short of that faith which was enjoined by the Apostles, and of which they were partakers, and by which they comforted others with the same comforts wherewith they were comforted of God ; but your faith denies us the present comfort of the pardon of your personal sins, keeping us in the dark concerning our interest in Christ, hiding from us the assurance of eternal life, directing professors to draw all their comfort touching the being of those momentous points from their personal external obedience, thereby leading them to conceit, that they are better than others ; for they who ground their assurance of eternal life on their own personal performances, must view themselves more righteous than those, who, they suppose, want this ground of hope ; and the faith which you want to obtrude on us, founds assurance on our own works. In this, your faith is so far from excluding boasting, that it is the grand support of it ; and the Pharisee (my brother) about whom you have made such a search to find in your neighbours, seems to be lurking in your own bosom, and nourished by your own doctrine.

S. The account I have given of the matter and nature of faith is most directly opposed to all legalism, even of the most refined nature ; for if that which is to be believed, be nothing but free and perfect salvation in another, there can be no room for self-dependence, especially if we remember, that faith is no act of ours, in order to obtain the Divine favour, but it is a mere persuasion of the truth, wherein the mind thinks of nothing for its hope and comfort, but the sovereign freedom of Divine grace in Christ ; and this faith is equally opposed to all Antinomanism, since

since the nature and genuine effects of it must be a careful attendance to the direction given and duties required in the word of grace.

C. I willingly perswade myself, that your meaning is better than what your words plainly import ; for even after you have put your account of faith in the best light you can, when considered in its true meaning, it is not so far removed from either legalism or Antinomianism as you seem to imagine ; for whatsoever encomiums you pass on the freedom of grace, yet when the weight of personal assurance rests directly on our own obedience, and not received simply by faith, it is little better than gross legalism ; and, on the other hand, those who ground their assurance on their external obedience, flowing from their notional faith, separated from an internal work of the Spirit of God, revealing Christ to the soul, and thereby carrying on a work of sanctification ; this assurance, I say, is no better than that of an Antinomian, because their obedience is but licentiousness, when compared to the true Christian evangelical obedience required in the Gospel, and contended for by those to whom you give the character of popular preachers. Although part of what you have last said amounts to the very same account which they give of faith ; for if the sinner has nothing for his hope of salvation but the mercy of God in Christ, and this blessed news of the Gospel comes with power to his mind, so as to fill him with joy and peace in believing, without any regard had to his past, present, or future obedience, then this implies a direct view of personal interest in Christ by faith ; for it is contrary to all rational experience to rejoice, on our own account, in an absolute promise or report, of which we are not to believe that we have any especial interest in it. A promise that is conditional, we may work ourselves into it ; but that which is absolute and unconditional, we can have no part in it but through the mere favour of the promiser. The Gospel is of this sort ; and all who receive it, receive it as given freely to

them in Christ Jesus ; and those that believe should be careful to maintain good works, not to make good their interest, but purely to shew forth the praises of him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light.

S. The description that we give of faith is entirely scriptural ; and we are well supported in asserting, that it gives no certain security of eternal life, or that no person can be assured of the favour of God to himself in a simple belief of the Gospel ; for though, according to the Scriptures, every one that understands and believes the true Gospel shall be saved by it, yet the Gospel being of a practical nature, nothing short of a conduct agreeable thereunto can be a sufficient proof that he believes what he professeth ; and all such persuasions as are unattended with the proper fruits of faith must, in their own nature, be invalid and enthusiastical, however any such assurances, impressions, manifestations, or revelations, may be dignified with the title of the witness, or seal of the Spirit, the assurance of faith, or the faith of assurance.

C. Sometimes you say, that the truth believed is faith ; again you say, faith is, that all our hope of eternal life is founded on what Jesus hath done ; and this last account comes nearest to the point, if you will admit that it is a sure hope, not founded jointly on what we shall do, and what Christ has done, but solely upon what Christ in his own person hath already done. In this light it includes special interest in Christ, as the *Lord our righteousness and strength* ; but if you will not allow this, then the faith and hope you speak of is absolutely legal, and cannot stand without your own works to support it ; and this seems to be intended by your saying, that the Gospel is of a practical nature ; the expression is dark, but according to your own words, we can take no assured comfort from the Gospel till we perform its precepts. If so, it is no more a Gospel of free grace, but it is of the tenor of the law, as it gives

no certainty of life separated from our works ; but the Gospel which the Apostles preached, is a declaration of pardoning mercy to the chief of sinners, founded on the practical and perfect obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ unto the death of the cross, thereby procuring and securing eternal life to all who shall believe in, or receive him. *Therefore to him that worketh not, but believeth in him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness,* Rom. iv. 14. for none of our works are needful to enable the Gospel to justify us ; but when it is believed in the light and power of the Lord, the Spirit, the grace of it is effectual in his hand, to bring every thought into the obedience of Jesus, 2 Cor. x. 6. And to make the believer fruitful in every good work, neither is faith at any time without internal fruits or effects ; yet these effects are not the ground of their assurance ; but these internal effects flow immediately from the assurance of the Divine love received in believing, as thus : Supposing a rich man to promise to one who is in debt and cast into prison, that he will liberate him, by freely paying the full sum he owed ; if the indigent person gave credit to it, he cannot but find emotions of love and gratitude in his heart towards his generous benefactor ; yet this disposition of his mind is not the ground on which he believeth, but it is solely the veracity of the promiser, and his joy is the effect of his crediting the report ; just and much more so is it with the sinner that believes the Gospel testimony and promise, because it comes with a Divine power, and the grace of it is interlined in the heart, so that it necessarily produceth both inward and outward effects, yet neither the internal nor the external works are the direct support of their assurance ; and if we receive the pardon of sin by faith without works, and justification by faith without works, then it follows, that assurance of particular relation to Christ must be received by faith without works, and that the former is true, see Rom. iii, 28. *We conclude, that a man is justified by faith without*

the deeds of the law. Acts xxvi. 18. *That they may receive the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith that is in me.* Pardon and justification are inseparably connected with faith, and none can be pardoned and justified without special interest in Christ; therefore, that assurance which the Christian is ascertained of by faith, or in believing, is neither enthusiastical nor licentious, being founded on the everlasting righteousness of him in whom all the promises are, yea and in him, Amen, 2 Cor. i. 20. and this faith effectually purgeth the heart unto the unfeigned love of the brethren, 1 Pet. i. 21. and allow me to observe, that the Christian is sometimes as diffident about the quality of his faith as that of his works; his hope of glory is not built on his act of faith, but solely on Christ, the object of it contained in the free promise; therefore I have all along said, that assurance of salvation is received in believing, not for believing, nor founded on the act of believing no more than on works. *I have believed, therefore have I spoken.*

S. I think it hath been abundantly proved, that no person's eternal election, special interest, or eventual salvation, can be certified in any other way than in and by a continued obedience to the will of Christ, as set forth in the Divine word; and I could venture the whole argument upon 1 John ii. 3, 4. *Hereby we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments; he that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* Here are two as plain and positive assertions as any in the whole Bible; therefore, whatsoever spirit contradicts, or in any measure sets this kind of evidence in any degree unnecessary, cannot be of God; whosoever then cherisheth an assurance in his mind which riseth higher than his evidence, and whosoever thinketh that his evidences riseth higher than his obedience, must be under the influence of some delusive spirit, whether his assurance be derived from any impressions made upon his mind, or from reflection upon

upon past experience, we may be sure that the Spirit of God never did, never will witness contrary to the word of God.

C. The knowledge which the text you have cited speaks of, does not simply respect the certainty which a believer has of his own state, but the evidence which we give to others, and receive from them, touching our joint acquaintance with, and relation to, Christ; and it is of the same scope with James ii. 18. But supposing it to be as you have represented it, I know of none that sets it altogether aside. I have already observed, that obedience is a corroborating proof of special interest; but it is not the direct, nor of itself a certain evidence, as will appear, if we consider the several ways by which the believer is certified in this point; and 1st, The Christian becomes assured of eternal life, by being enabled to believe from the heart the testimony of God. *He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself,* 1 John v. 10. But these are written that ye might believe, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and that believing, you might have life through his name, John xx. 32. *He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life,* John iii. 36. And this assurance which is received by faith cannot rise higher than its evidences, which are neither more nor less than the spotless obedience of Jesus Christ, the promise, power, and faithfulness of God revealed in the Gospel, Heb. vi. 18. recorded in Heaven by the Father, Word, and Holy Ghost, 1 John v. 7. and ratified in the resurrection of Christ from the dead, *Who was delivered for our offences, and rose again for our justification,* Rom. iv. 26. And this testimony is more to be depended on than the most solemn attestation of men and angels, and more permanent than Heaven and earth; for *the mountains shall depart, and the hills shall be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed,* saith the Lord, *that hath mercy on thee,* Isai. Ixiv. 10. And the language of true faith to all its-

its accusers is, *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us,* Rom. viii. 33. Again. Believers are certified of their part in Christ by the work of grace in their hearts, and the fruits of it in their lives, Isai. xxvi. 13. *Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us, for thou hast wrought all our work in us.* We know that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren; but neither inward nor external obedience is of itself any evidence, but in connection with faith. Again, Rom. viii. 16. *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God;* from which we may note, that this joint testimony of the Spirit with their spirit, is not made either to men or to angels, but to their own hearts, whereby they know severally for themselves their relation to God as children, which is the third way of the believer's receiving assurance, and is first in a way of bearing testimony to the truth of that grace and sincerity which he, the Lord, the Spirit, hath wrought, and implanted in the believer's heart, which the Apostle calls, *his conscience bearing him witness in the Holy Ghost,* Rom. xi. 1. And secondly, the Holy Spirit bears witness in an immediate and powerful manner, applying to the afflicted soul, the blood, righteousness, grace, and everlasting love of Christ, as contained in the promise of a gracious and faithful God; and all this in so rich and powerful a way, as fills the soul with inexpressible joy, and assurance of especial interest in God. Isai. li. 12. *I, even I, am he that comforteth you, &c.* And thus the believer is certified without respect to any of his works; and this confidence cannot arise higher than its evidence; which is the testimony of the Spirit of truth, who cannot lie; neither can, nor doth the Lord, the Spirit, act in all this contrary to the Scriptures; for there the Lord graciously speaketh even to those who have wearied him with their sins, and made him

to serve with their iniquities, Isai. xlivi. 25, 26. *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions, for mine own name's sake, and will not remember thy sins; put me in remembrance, let us plead together, declare ye, that you might be justified.* Now, as the Lord thus speaketh to persons who are going on in sin, it can be no incongruity, nor any impeachment of his spotless purity, to bear testimony in the aforesaid manner to the soul of the distressed Christian, which is abundantly confirmed by the experience of the saints recorded in Scripture, and by many now in our world; nevertheless, the comfort of this manifestation and testimony may soon be lost, through the temptations of Satan, and the workings of unbelief. Psal. xxx. *Thou hidest thy face, and I was troubled; neither can our obedience of itself restore joy, for all their virtue depends on believing, so Job xxiii. 8. Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him; on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him.* In the next words we see, that his relief was in the way of believing, ver. 10. *But he knoweth the way that I take; when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold;* and if we do not know that we have peace with God by faith, prior to our obedience, how can we know that our works are acceptable with God, so as to be assured of eternal life; our works are partial; many things often, if not entirely, omitted, and what we do are absolutely imperfect; how then can they give us a ground to believe, that we are interested in Christ. Again, how can any works done by us give us assurance, that we shall persevere in well-doing, for many seem to begin in the spirit who end in the flesh; and therefore, no man, upon your notion of faith, can have any certain ground for the hope of eternal life; but the Christian faith gives us a direct and sure ground of our special interest in these great points, both in respect to perseverance in the ways of God, and the enjoyment of eternal life; for faithful is he who

who hath promised, who also will do it. *Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation,* 1 Pet. i. 7. From the whole it is evident, that the assurance of faith, or the faith of assurance, which resteth alone its evidence of special interest on the Divine testimony, is truly evangelical, and riseth no higher than its evidence, neither shall it ever fail; but that assurance which is founded on our own obedience, riseth much higher than its evidences; and, according to your own words, is only from a delusive spirit, and altogether unscriptural, and at best is but weak and unstable as water.

S. It has been said, that the actings of faith as they are called, in the workings of the affections, are so powerful and self-evident, that a person can no more doubt of his faith, or of his especial interest, than he can be insensible of the strong emotions of his own mind; but let it be remembered, that such an assurance may be proved to be only a fond imagination, and no more than what the stony ground hearers have found in themselves. It is injurious to the character of the Holy Spirit to suppose, that he witnesseth to our Sonship, while we are actually neglecting the obedience required, or declining to suffer for Christ's sake; and that which is any proper proof of an interest in Christ, consists in those workings of the affections, which accompany actual obedience to the laws of Christ; taking Gospel experience and evidence of interest in this view, it is clear, that we have nothing to rest upon but the free grace of God in Christ, which is our hope and strength, and to serve him with all our hearts, from a sense of this his love to us, which constrains us to live unto him. How little these things are regarded, or so much as though on as necessary evidence of faith by many, who think they are certified about their state, I leave to every man's conscience.

C. If any, from a sense of the love of Christ, are constrained to live unto him, this supposes that they believe, that his love is fixed on them, which is
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what we assert, but you deny ; therefore what you have said touching this point, has no connection with your principles, but belongs to ours.

It is no reflection upon a good man, when he seals to his disobedient child his paternal affection, in order to reclaim him ; neither can it be any dishonour to the purity of God, to speak that to the heart of sinners, which he hath declared concerning them in his word ; and there he calls Ephraim a son, though an unwise son, and promiseth to ransom them from the power of the grave, and redeem them from death, Hos. xiii. 14. And as God speaketh thus in his word concerning sinners while in their sins, so he may reveal the same things to their mind while in the same state, as it is for their recovery, and makes it effectual to that end ; and it is far more iniquitous to limit the Holy Ghost in his operations, than to assert, that he is graciously pleased sometimes to speak peace and pardon to the soul while in sin ; the end of which is salvation from sin, as many have experienced. *This is my comfort in my affliction, for thy word bath quickened me,* Psal. cxix. 50. *He will speak peace unto his people and to his saints, but let them not return again to folly,* Psalm lxxxv. It is evident, even from 2 Pet. chap. 1. that a sense of interest is received directly in obtaining the precious faith, through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ ; and the bottom of Gospel confidence and assurance is, as his Divine power *bath given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that bath called us to glory and virtue, whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises, that by them we may be made partakers of the Divine nature.* In the belief of this, the Christian is ascertained of his right to eternal life, and his attaining to it is, in and through Jesus Christ, his righteousness and strength ; and the Apostle exhorts in verse 5. *Besides this (as if he had said, strengthen that assurance which you have received of your interest in Christ through believing) in giving all diligence*

gence to add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance, &c. This, I humbly think, is the natural scope and sense of the words, neither have I in the least receded from it; but I say, agreeable to the Scriptures, that knowledge of special interest is received directly in believing the Divine testimony, and our external obedience is only so far a proof or evidence of this, as it is connected with, and flows from faith. Your words appear to me not to be all of a piece; for they who ground their assurance of a special interest alone on the record of God, have nothing for the peace of their mind, and foundation of their confidence before Jehovah, but Christ held out in the promise and testimony of God; and in proportion to their faith in this truth, they are assured of eternal life and final salvation, in and through Jesus Christ, and are from this confidence excited to live as the sons of God, Phil. ii. 16. But those who bottom their assurance on their own obedience, are the very contrast to this; for whatever be the thing that assures the man of his special right, that very thing is the ground of his hope, and gives rest to his mind, touching his eternal state; and as you make your obedience to the Gospel precepts your direct evidence for Heaven, then it is manifest you seek something else besides Christ revealed in the word, to comfort and assure your minds of eternal life; and all the encouragement that your faith draws from the Gospel report, amounts only to this, that it excites to obedience, in hopes of certain salvation, if we do good works. Thus it removes the severity of the law, and gives hopes, that our imperfect doings will be accepted, but till works be performed, your faith gives no assured confidence of acceptance with God; but this no ways agrees with the Apostle, Rom. iv. 5. *To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.* It is manifest, from the Apostle's reasoning in this chapter, that evangelical assurance of acceptance with God is received by believing, prior to,

to, and separate from, all our personal works ; and if there is no assured hope but what is gained in a course of obedience, then there is no propriety in the Apostle's reasoning, and our own works must be the only ground of our rejoicing before God, which is contrary to the whole scope of the Gospel. And this (brother) seems to be the true meaning of your words, and is neither more or less than what those said who are called Armenians ; though I verily think, that both you and many of them speak so more from a good than a bad design; viz. Lest some should take liberty to sin from the contrary doctrine, as you think ; which is so far well in you both ; nevertheless, I humbly think, that you should query, whether the great stir you make for Gospel obedience proceedeth from real love to holiness, or rather that legal spirit which is natural to us, and struggleth hard for something of its own, to be less or more a ground of rejoicing in the presence of God. Of this we have all great reason to examine ourselves ; and I shall only add, that the Gospel faith, which assures the soul of special interest in Christ, lays the surest foundation for a holy life, and is the only powerful excitement to a heavenly conversation. *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, teacheth us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world, &c.* Titus ii. 1.

S. Our Lord hath expressly said, Matth. x. 22. *He that endureth unto the end, shall be saved*; and if none but such can be saved, then none can know that they shall be saved, but those that endure unto the end ; and the account which I have given of the Christian faith, is agreeable to the words of Christ, and is so far from coinciding with the Armenians, that it is closely connected, and is a confirmation of all those doctrines of the word which are denied by them, viz. Election, particular redemption, original sin, irresistible grace, and the perseverance of the saints.

C. It is most certain, that all who are the subjects of precious faith, shall endure unto the end; and they in part know, that nothing shall separate them from the love of Christ, Rom. viii. I make no doubt of your assenting to these points of truth; but your notion of faith hath no aspect upon them as to your own state, for you have divested it of all appropriating and interesting properties; and that faith which gives no comfortable views of any special interest in those grand points, has no certain and visible connection with them, therefore this belongeth not to your faith; but to the Christian faith, as it apprehends an interest in, and rests on Christ, receives in him a comfortable view of our being included in all the doctrines of grace, and shall persevere unto eternal glory. 1 Pet. i. 3. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope, (not by our own works, but) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation;* and whatever you have said, to show the connection betwixt Gospel faith and those doctrines you mention, it makes nothing for you while you propagate that faith, which gives no special interest in the word of promise, but upon the footing of our own works. I know not how many works you think must be done before a person may draw a certain conclusion of his state; but I am sure, that your account differs much from the Gospel, which faith, *Being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.* Good works, or obedience, are the certain consequences of this faith and peace, but not the foundation of it. *For other foundation can no man lay than what is laid, which is Jesus Christ,* 1 Cor. iii. 11.

S. It is indeed certain, that we are in great danger of being deceived as to our consciousness concerning the goodness of our state as founded on our own works; for after all we have done, the only ground

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of our unshaken comfort is, the absolute free grace of God in Christ, which is set before us in the word ; and the freedom of Divine grace is such, as to supersede any necessity of being at present ascertained as to special interest, in order to have a sufficient encouragement for the relief of our conscience in the presence of God ; for this is held forth plainly and freely in the Gospel, so that we need not be distressed or dispirited, while it remains to be a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. If we can believe this, and see Jesus Christ to be freely all in all for helpless and condemned sinners, we shall find rest to our souls, even when we can find it no where else, and receive such a hope as is sure and stedfast, and shall be taught, yea, constrained to love him ; cleave to him, and serve him according to the direction of his word, and thereby our faith will be proved to be real, genuine, and saving.

C. I rejoice, brother, that our conversation is like to come to so good an issue ; for now you have fully confirmed all that I have been hinting at ; for if, after all our own works, we may be deceived in judging favourably of our state, and that the only ground of a sure hope is the rich and free mercy of God, which reigns through Jesus Christ unto eternal life, then it follows, that the testimony of God concerning his Son, is the best and only sure evidence of a sinner's hope, which is enjoyed in believing ; and when Christ is fully received by faith, the sinner is freed from all perplexing concerns about any thing else, because they find in Christ every thing that renders them personally accepted with God, in the beloved, Eph. i. 6. And all those who doubt of their interest in Christ, can find no peace in the presence of God, while such hesitations remain ; for nothing can purge the heart from guilt, and give the soul boldness in approaching near to God, but the blood of Christ ; and when this is applied by the Holy Ghost, this, and this alone effectually purges

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the conscience from dead works to serve the living God, Heb. ix. 14. And the freedom of grace is so far from superceding the present view of our own interest, that it manifestly supposes and encourages it; and all these doubts and fears which distress the mind, are entirely owing to our not fully and constantly exercising faith on Christ, as the Lord our righteousness; and we are encouraged in the Gospel to draw near to God, by appropriating faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Heb. x. 21, 22. *Having an high priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith; and those who thus believe are such as worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,* Phil. iii. 3. And I would construct part of what you have now said in this view, so that we are happily agreed; therefore nothing remains but that we endeavour to build upon one another in our most holy faith, and live to the glory and praise of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light, 1 Pet. i. 9.

S. I thought that you intended to support the popular notion of assurance on your inward feelings, but you have endeavoured to establish it on your believing the testimony of God, which has something of both legalist and Antinomian; as it flows from your supposed inward work, it is connected with the former, and as it has no respect to future obedience, it is allied to the latter; therefore, opposed to the scriptural assurance of special interest, which is obtained by a continual observance of the Gospel precepts; however, I shall think on some things which you have observed, and may give you my thoughts on them at a more convenient time.

C. I esteem it a favour that I have had your company so long, and the more so, if any thing that has been hinted, shall be thought worthy your consideration, and be made of any use to promote that faith and love which is the sum of Christianity, and should ever be in full exercise to all who look for salvation through

through Jesus Christ. Although they differ from us in some things, which often lies more in words than in substance, through a misunderstanding one of another; an instance we have of this in your constructions upon what I have said; for I have all along observed, that although true faith flows from a Divine principle of life, received when the soul is vitally united to Christ, in effectual calling, yet personal assurance and special interest is neither founded immediately on that received life, nor yet upon the act of believing, but directly and solely on the promise and testimony of God. Heb. vi. 17, 18. *By two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us.* Psalm lx. 6. *God hath spoken in his holiness. I will rejoice; I will divide Sichehem; I will mete out the valley of Succoth.* And this Divine faith is always, in proportion to the degree and exercise of it, productive of reverential fear, and a Gospel conversation; therefore it hath not the least tendency to the Neonomian or Antinomian side. And as to our worthy brethren, whom you term popular preachers, I understand them as agreeing to what I have said; but if some of them should fix the evidence of personal interest on the work of God in the soul, this can be no objection to their Christianity, no more than it can be against those who ground their assurance on the external fruits of faith, nor those who build it on the testimony of God's holy word. This is only as if some drank at the spring head, others at the stream flowing from it; and some drink of the same water, but not till it be brought into the house; however, all are partakers of the same fountain, and cannot but speak well of it; yet, I humbly think, that those who are enabled to rely solely on the mercy of God, flowing through the meritorious righteousness and fulness that is in Christ; they, I say, enjoy the most pure and permanent comfort, and their obedience seems to be most evangelical; nevertheless, all those who find peace and

and rest in the blood of Christ, and their confidence for eternal life founded alone on God in Christ, whether assurance of special interest arises directly from believing the promises, or from the work of God on the heart, or from the fruits of grace in their lives, it makes nothing against the evidence of their Christianity; for where any one, or all of these things are in reality, it is all of God, and experienced less or more by all the saints, who acknowledge that the whole of their salvation is all of free, rich, and sovereign grace, reigning through Jesus Christ our Lord, and all who are thus minded; *Peace be unto them, and mercy even upon the Israel of God;* but as your time will not admit of any further conversation, I shall only add, that through rich grace, it shall be my earnest prayer, that God may shed abroad his love in our hearts, that we may abound in love to his people of all denominations, without which our obedience to the Gospel will be very defective, and we destitute of the distinguishing characteristic of Christians. *By this shall all men know, that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another.* John xiii. 35.



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